













# **INDIAN CINEMATOGRAPH COMMITTEE**

**1927—1928**

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## **EVIDENCE**

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**Volume I**

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**Oral Evidence  
of  
Witnesses examined at Bombay and Karachi,  
with their Written Statements.**



**CALCUTTA: GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
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# EVIDENCE.

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# INDIAN CINEMATOGRAPH COMMITTEE.

## QUESTIONNAIRE.

### INSTRUCTIONS.

*If you are willing to answer any of the questions kindly send your reply as soon as possible to the Secretary, Indian Cinematograph Committee, whose address will be c/o Presidency Postmaster, Bombay (up to 18th November); and thereafter c/o Postmaster, General Post Office, Lahore (up to 30th November); and thereafter c/o Home Department, Delhi.*

### INTRODUCTORY.

1. Have you any special knowledge of, or connection with the Cinematograph Industry either in India or abroad? If so, what?

### GENERAL.

2. (a) In your experience to what extent do Indians (1) of the educated classes and (2) of the illiterate classes frequent Cinemas? To what extent is such attendance on the increase? (Please explain to what place or area your answer refers).

(b) Can you give an idea of the composition of an average Cinema audience in the locality of which you can speak?

(c) What proportion of the audience consists of children under 14 or adolescents of impressionable age?

### PART I.

#### *Film Industry in India.*

3. Have you any opinion as to what classes of films are the most popular with Indian audiences and generally in India?

4. Are the exhibitors catering adequately for Indian audiences? If not, what are the reasons?

5. Are Indian-produced films, depicting Indian life, readily available to exhibitors? If so,

(a) are they of good quality?

(b) are they popular?

(c) is it ordinarily less or more profitable to show an Indian than a Western film? Can you cite any examples of successful Indian films?

6. (a) Do you think that films of Indian life topical Indian news, and scenes (with Indian actors) depicting stories from the national literature, history and mythology, would be more popular with Indian audiences than the prevalent Western films?

(b) Of such films, what kind would appeal most strongly.

(1) to the educated classes,

(2) to the illiterate population?

7. Is difficulty experienced in obtaining suitable films for exhibition to the British and Indian Troops? If so, in what way exactly are the films unsuitable? What sort of films are both suitable and popular?

8. (a) Are you satisfied with the present condition of the Industry in this country in its several branches of production, distribution and exhibition?

(b) If you are not satisfied, what in your opinion are the main difficulties besetting the Industry and what means would you suggest for assisting it?

9. Are good films readily obtainable by exhibitors at reasonable prices?

If not, is there any special reason for this?

Is there any monopoly or tendency to monopoly of the supply or exhibition of films?

10. Do the systems of "block" and "blind" booking and of "first run" or "key theatres" exist in India?

If so, explain the advantages and disadvantages thereof to the Trade and the Public?

11. Have the exhibitors in this country sufficient facilities for previewing films?

Have you any suggestions to make on this matter?

12. To what extent is the Amusement Tax (where it exists) a handicap to the exhibitor?

13. How does the present customs Tariff on imported films affect the exhibitors? How far is it useful for promoting the indigenous production of films? What suggestions have you to make regarding the Tariff generally on all materials connected with the Film Industry?

14. Do you consider that an increased use of the Cinema for educational purposes in schools and for adult education in Agriculture, Public Health, etc., by Government or other agencies would help the growth of the film industry in this country?

Is there any demand for such films?

15. Are conditions in this country favourable to development of an Indian film-producing industry on a large scale?

What are the reasons for your opinion?

16. Do you consider that there are Indian producers, directors, actors, actresses and scenario-writers of sufficient technical knowledge, enterprise, resource and adaptability on whom the country can depend for a substantial output of films of real competitive exhibition value?

What measures would you suggest to supply a deficiency?

17. Do you consider that sufficient capital in India is or will be forthcoming for film-production?

18. Do you consider that suitable Government action whether legislative or administrative may be an effective incentive and encouragement to private enterprise for film production? Can you suggest what suitable action can be taken by Government?

19. How does the cost of film-production in this country compare with that in other countries?

20. (a) Do any of your proposals involve expenditure from Government funds? If so, do you think that such expenditure is justifiable, having regard to the other needs of the country?

(b) Have you any suggestions to make regarding the sources from which such expenditure may be met?

21. What is your opinion regarding a proposal which has been made that to ensure the production and exhibition of films conforming to moral standards, to provide a centralised neutral distributing agency and furnish a fair market, and to inaugurate the use of teaching and propaganda films, and generally to improve the conditions of the Film Industry in all its aspects, including censorship, a State agency should be created to undertake the management of the Film Industry as a monopoly?

#### *Films of the British Commonwealth.*

22. Should India participate in the policy outlined in the resolution of the Imperial Conference to give some measure of encouragement to British Empire films, and if so would such participation

(a) assist the development of her own film industry,

(b) assist in making herself better known and understood throughout the Empire and the world, and

(c) improve the standard of Western films shown in India.

Have you any suggestions as to the methods of putting such a policy into practice and the limitations if any?

23. (a) To what extent can cinema pictures be used for making known the conditions, resources and habits of the peoples, and the activities of the various Governments, of the British Commonwealth of Nations to each other?

(b) What measures would you suggest for getting the various Governments to co-operate to this end?

## PART II.

### *Social Aspects and Control.*

24. (a) Do you consider that any class of films exhibited in this country has a demoralising or otherwise injurious effect upon the public?

(b) Is there a general circulation of immoral or criminally suggestive films?

(c) In your opinion what class of film is harmful? To whom is it harmful? In what way is it harmful?

(d) Consider specifically whether censorship is adequate in the cases of

(1) "Sex" films,

(2) "Crime" films.

(e) Do you consider there has been any increase of crime in your Province due to the Cinema?

(f) Support your statements wherever possible by instances within your personal knowledge.

25. Do you consider that the differences in social customs and out-look between the West and the East necessitate special consideration in the censorship of films in this country?

26. (a) Should more care be taken in censoring films likely to offend religious susceptibilities?

(b) Can you give an example of any film which has offended the religious susceptibilities of any class of the community?

27. (a) Have any of the films exhibited in India a tendency to misrepresent Western civilization or to lower it in the eyes of Indians? Is it a fact that films representing Western life are generally unintelligible to an uneducated Indian or are largely misunderstood by him? If so, do undesirable results follow from this? Have you any suggestions to make on this point?

(b) Do you know of any films exhibited abroad which have a tendency to misrepresent Indian civilisation? If so, were they produced in India?

28. Has any class of film shown in this country a bad effect on—

(a) children,

(b) adolescents.

If so—

(1) what class of film?

(2) in what way is it harmful?

29. Are you in favour of certification of certain films as "For Adults Only"?

30. Are you in favour of prohibiting all children below a certain age from visiting Cinemas except for special "Childrens' Performances"? If so, why? What age do you suggest?

31. (a) Do you consider that censorship is an effective method of guarding against misuse of the film?

32. Do you think that the present system of Censorship in your Province is satisfactory? If not, in what way is it defective? Can you suggest any improvement?

**33. Would a strict Censorship—**

- (a) interfere unreasonably with the recreations of the people?
- (b) involve a falling off in the attendance at Cinemas?
- (c) unduly interfere with the freedom required for artistic and inspirational development?

**34. (a) Do you advocate the replacement of the present Provincial Boards of Censors by a single Central Board?**

- (1) If so, why?
- (2) Would this cause any inconvenience to the Trade?
- (3) How should such a Central Board be constituted?
- (4) Where should it be situated?

**(b) Or, would you advocate a Central Board in addition to the Provincial Boards?**

(c) If you advocate a Central Board working either alone or with Provincial Boards, how would you regulate the relationship between the various Boards and the Central and Local Governments?

**(d) How should such a Board or Boards be financed?**

**35. (a) Is the present constitution of the Provincial Boards (of which at least half the Members must, under the law, be non-officials) satisfactory?**

(b) Would you prefer a whole-time experienced well-paid officer as Censor at each centre, to be assisted by an Advisory Board of non-officials?

**36. (a) Do you think that the present system (prevailing at Bombay and Calcutta) under which films are ordinarily examined by inspectors subordinate to the Board is satisfactory? Are such inspectors sufficiently well qualified for the work? What sort of qualifications are essential?**

(b) Or do you think that all films should be examined by Members of the Board? If so, do you consider that gentlemen of suitable standing will be available who would be prepared to devote sufficient time to the examination of films for a reasonable remuneration?

**37. (a) Are there adequate safeguards under the Act for preventing the exhibition of a film which may be objectionable locally although it has been passed by a Board in some other part of India?**

(b) Do you consider that any safeguards are needed?

**38. Do you know any instances of films which have been passed by a Board of Censors in one Province and found objectionable in another Province?**

**39. Have you come across any instances of pictures disapproved or banned from exhibition in the country of origin or in Great Britain being exhibited in India?**

**40. Should posters, handbills and advertisements of Cinema performances also be censored? What measures would you suggest for such censorship without undue restriction on freedom?**

Have you noticed any such advertisements which were objectionable? In what way were they objectionable?

**41. Have you noticed any improvement in the moral standard of the films exhibited in India in recent years?**

**42. Have you any suggestions to make for getting the co-operation of the trade in the matter of the Censorship?**

**43. (a) Is there need for a stricter control over the import and export of films?**

(b) If so, why?

(c) What methods should be adopted for this purpose?

**44. To what extent could public bodies and the Press assist in maintaining a good standard of films?**

**45. (a) Should some control be exercised by Government over film-production, and if so what should be the nature of such control?**

(b) Should all film-producing agencies be registered and licensed, and their studios periodically inspected?

**NOTE.**

- . In the case of those whose names are marked with an asterisk the record of oral evidence was not corrected by the witness.



## BOMBAY.

### Written Statement of the Bombay Cinema and Theatres Trade Association in collaboration with the Indian Motion Pictures Producers' Association, dated the 5th November 1927.

#### *Replies to Questionnaire.*

1. Yes, we are a Trade Association, comprising of Producers, Exhibitors and Importers of Cinema films, and, as such, we have been concerned with the development, and steady maintenance of the Cinema Industry in this country, even as some of us assisted at its birth in the early days. In so far as our business brings us in contact with the state of the Industry abroad, we are also in a position to speak with knowledge on the conditions prevailing there.

2. (a) (1) In Bombay  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the attendance from the educated Indians and (2)  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the attendance from the illiterate classes of the Indians. The attendance from the educated classes according to our impression is steady; but there appears an increase of about 5 per cent. in the patronage from the illiterate classes.

(b) In Fort, Bombay, where Foreign pictures are used, educated Indians, Europeans, and Anglo-Indians only.

Round Girgaum, where Indian pictures are largely used, mostly Indians of all classes.

Round Parel-Dadar, where Indian pictures are almost principally used. Indians only, with a preponderance of the Hindus.

(c) About 3 per cent. of the audience.

#### PART I.

3. The most popular films with the Indian audiences are those they can easily follow. It means India Productions in the first instance, and in the next place, foreign pictures of the type of comedies, comedy-dramas, and thrilling pictures of the adventure variety.

4. Yes.

5. Considering the number of Cinemas at present given to showing, exclusively, the Indian pictures, the Indian-produced pictures are readily available.

(a), (b) Yes.

(c) Indian-produced films are more profitable to the Exhibitors than the Western Films. Also, those of the Western films that have some Oriental theme or settings, do equally well as the Indian-produced films. A few of the successful Indian films are:—Krishna Janma, Aladin, Sinhabhad, Gulbakavli, Magician of Bengal, Sacrifice, At the Clang of Fetters, Sardar Ha, Leila Majanun.

6. (a) Yes.

(b) *To the educated classes*:—Indian Life, Topical Indian News, Stories from the National History and Literature.

*To the illiterate population*:—Topical Indian News, History and Mythology.

7. No difficulty is being experienced in exhibiting films to the British and Indian Troops, as, to our knowledge, no special type of films is wanted by them.



8. (a) *Production*.—With this aspect of the Trade we are satisfied, as the Indian pictures are produced according to the demand of the general Indian population. For better results, our Studios may want adequate and up-to-date equipment, enlarged plants and general enlargement, which, of course, is a question of finance on the part of those at present engaged in the production business. In any case, it will be a distinct incentive to the Indian producers if the various branches of Government can be induced to place at their disposal the necessary resources from, say, the local Fire Brigade Stations, the Zoo, the Museum, the Railways, the Tramways Company, and so on.

*Distribution*.—No difficulty is experienced under this head so far. Distribution takes place in accordance with demand, except in parts of India which are as good as monopolised by Madan Theatres, Limited, where expecting to distribute any films by any outside film agency, is out of the question.

*Exhibition*.—The Exhibitors, in every case, start with having determined their policy according to the nature of the locality in which they own a place for exhibition, and cater to the public accordingly. In the Bombay Presidency, though competition is at its best, the Exhibitor has as good a scope as can be wished, for finding out his own pictures. The Cinemas on this side have to be pucca-built buildings under the Police and the Municipal Rules and Regulations, and we believe, that the public have a more than adequate return on their admission fees. However, the following, among others (and speaking broadly), do operate as obstacles in the way of the Industry as a whole, viz.:—

- (1) A policy of charging fantastic and disproportionate rates for publishing advertisements on the part of newspaper owners.
- (2) The Entertainment Duty Act (*vide* answer 12 also).
- (3) Municipal Tax on Posters and Public advertisements.
- (4) Want of a common language throughout the country.
- (5) The prevalence of a large conservative mind that still believes Cinema shows to be wasteful luxury.

9. In Bombay, the Cinema Trade, as at the present moment, is well balanced, in the sense, that, looking to the state of public demand, houses showing Indian pictures and those using Foreign ones, are evenly divided. In this posture of the Trade as a whole, it is permissible to say that bearing in mind the number of houses requiring Indian pictures, good Indian pictures are readily available. Also, considering the answer from this point of view, and the fact that Indian pictures are ceaselessly in demand at the Theatres which exclusively run them, the price paid and accepted, as between the Indian Producer and the Exhibitor, must be taken to be reasonable.

There is no monopoly, or tendency to monopoly, as regards production of Indian pictures. But after production when it becomes the Exhibitor's question, the latter has a monopoly to face in the huge chain of theatres monopolised by Madan Theatres, Limited, all over India where Indian-produced pictures are hardly shown.

10. Yes. In India the "block" system, strictly so called, is non-existent. But the "blind" booking and the "first run" or "key theatres" systems are practised. These systems being purely a Trade facility practised by Trades people among themselves, there are no advantages or disadvantages to the Trade or the people.

11. If previewing in this question means Trade showing, no necessity for such shows is felt so far.

12. The Bombay tax on amusements has always been a drag on Cinema and Theatres owners. It was bitterly opposed by the Trade before inception, and has been equally unpopular ever since. We attach a copy of our

representation to the Select Committee of the Bombay Legislative Council, dated the 28th day of October 1922 as an Appendix which speaks for itself.

The officials have always urged that this Tax is paid by the people visiting the Theatres and that therefore it does not affect the public entertainers in any way. This is a fallacy, inasmuch as, the Exhibitors who reduced their rates of admission immediately the Act came into operation so as to make the quota of Tax self-contained in the revised price of admission, have never been able to re-increase their rates, and are thus practically bearing the Tax themselves. In case where this is not so, it is self-evident that the public at large who, in these days of financial shortage, keep theatrical enjoyment the very last item on their domestic budgets (after first providing for all the bare necessities) cannot be presumed to possess that indifference to pay the quota of Tax on each ticket bought in the family which the officers lead us to believe is the case. And to this extent, therefore, it must, in fairness to the Trade, be presumed that even so far as the public is concerned, the Tax is collected on sufferance.

The Bombay Entertainments Duty Act makes an exemption of seats up to and including 4 annas from the operation of the Act. This because, presumably, the Legislators have thought that such exemption would recognise the poorest class of the Cinema-goers as really unable to pay the Tax. If this is so, the Act makes no allowance in the case of admission tickets between the prices 4 annas and 12 annas which are usually bought by the middle class of people having families of children and adults. To this extent, therefore, the Tax is again a handicap to the Exhibitors, who cannot get all the patronage from the middle class thus affected, which they should.

In the districts of the Bombay Presidency, the officials concerned with the duties of collecting the Tax, we regret to say, leave much to desire. It is frequently the case that public shows in the middle of their progress are held up by Police authorities who then proceed to carry out their checking in a way that is obnoxious both to the tradesman and the public. So far as this goes, we in Bombay City are singularly happy. And we believe that because of these obnoxious methods of checking in the mofussil the Trade in those areas is still further affected. It is an article of faith in the Trade that the operation of the Act be immediately withdrawn from the Cinema and Theatres if Government is seriously inclined to help matters. The present Act has sufficient provision to enable the local government to withdraw from the operation of the Act a place of entertainment or class of entertainment.

13. The present Customs Tariff on imported films is so trivial that it does not at all affect the exhibitors showing Foreign films. On the contrary, such Tariff is highly prejudicial to the Producers and the Exhibitors of Indian films. The remedy for this should be as we have suggested in our answer to question No. 43 below.

14. Yes, we believe that such a scheme will be advantageous to the growth of film Industry in India. But we have grave doubts that the scheme will be successful except in the districts outside the Provincial towns. The demand for such films has been very feeble.

15. Yes.

16. The Indian Producers on this side have made their own Directors who can produce perfectly satisfactory work for India.

As regards actors and actresses, it is well-known that India does not lack for talent in acting, male or female.

As regards films of real competitive exhibition value, it must be remembered that all indigenous pictures must be judged on their own merits. Developments, as far as contemplated in this question is a question of time so far as Indian enterprise is concerned.

17. Yes, if and when, the Trade is properly understood by capitalists, and the Government come out to give facilities to the Trade as asked for in answer to question 8 (a) and 43, and the difficulties pointed out, removed.

## 18. No.

19. We do not think that a serious comparison is possible between the relative costs—the one is so high and the other so low; but for the Indian Producer it is not possible barely to realise the cost of production because of the limited market at their disposal. In the result, very many Indian-producing concerns have had to be closed down. The Indian Producers have had to produce variously and differently for the several districts and Provinces of the country, and this factor operates adversely in realising the money spent.

20. If the Government decides on helping the Indian Producers with a bounty, or loans on interest, they must be prepared to do so from their revenues. It is not possible for the Producers to obtain loans from Banks or private concerns at present, even on security of films.

21. We are not in favour of a State Agency created to undertake the management of the film Industry as a monopoly.

22. There is very little enlightenment available in India as regards the policy outlined in the Resolution of the Imperial Conference and we in Bombay have no means of studying that question. To the experience of the Trade, British pictures have not proved successful in India on their own merits. To seek to make them successful now by the side-door of Imperial, or any other, Preference, would place the Trade on the wrong side of their books. If the scheme outlined in the above policy aims at improving the present standard of British pictures, then there is no reason why they should not succeed on their own merits without the artificial aid of legalised Preference.

(a) Vide our answer to Question No. 43 below.

(b) The answer to this depends on the merits of the scheme of which so little is known in India.

(c) The standard of Western films as at the present day has been so progressively magnificent that to continue to expect any further "improvement" on that standard, in our humble opinion, amounts to hair-splitting.

23. (a) The possibility of Cinema films is always immense, for education and propaganda. But any idea of propaganda of Political nature must be cautiously accepted.

(b) This is a matter for the individual resources of each Government and the amount of good-will which it can bring to bear on the question as a whole.

24. (a) No. The films at present shown in India are rigidly censored and even a lurking suggestion of crime, let alone any methods of crime is deleted from the films either by the producers themselves, or by the local censoring authorities. Then again, the leading Producers of the world are anxious to produce "clean" pictures which are bound to be accepted as such universally.

(b) Not at all.

(c) In our opinion, pictures depicting the following traits, if produced, would be held objectionable anywhere:—

- (1) Loose morals mainly treated.
- (2) Illicit love unpunished.
- (3) Drinking as an idea of refinement.
- (4) Gambling as a successful aid to wealth.
- (5) Use of drugs as a means of pleasure.

This class of pictures would be particularly harmful to men and women with a criminal instinct in them, and, who, by birth, association or habits, are inclined to what is morbid in life. The harm may result from the fact

that a sight of such a class of pictures, if produced, would serve to feed their morbid sense and would make them satisfied with nothing less.

(d) (1) Sex questions are very prominently and widely discussed all over the world to-day without let or hindrance. But the censorship of sexy films is a bit more rigid than should be. The output of Sex films, strictly so called is by no means great.

(2) "Crime" films call for particularly intelligent censoring, because, in every "crime" film there is to be seen a very high level of detective ability portrayed.

(e) It is impossible to believe that in this Province there is any increase of crime which can be attributed to the Cinema. On the other hand, we have heard of cases to show that the custom of the liquor shops has diminished after the opening of a Cinema in that vicinity.

(f) No evidence is forthcoming to show beyond a reasonable doubt that the "hero" in a Police Court trial had modelled himself on the doings of a "villain" of the Cinema screen, and nothing else. If, and where, crime is on the increase, in a Province, it is largely attributable to the present-day struggle for existence due to extensive unemployment, and the modern resources of civilisation, such as, fire-arms, Motor-cars, and so on, easily available to a would-be criminal.

25. No special consideration is necessary in the censorship of Foreign films of Social nature, as the illiterate people in India never care to see Social films of any Foreign country as they can hardly follow them, and, consequently, cannot enjoy such pictures, good or bad. On the other hand, the cultured class of people of this country who have a taste for Society pictures, are fully able to understand the sentiment in such pictures and can appreciate them in the right direction.

26. (a) "Religious susceptibility" has always been a great point in India. However, censorship of pictures involving religious susceptibilities is a distinct question of local conditions at a given moment. We are of opinion that care should be taken in avoiding wounding the religious susceptibilities of any sect or class, in every *bona fide* case.

(b) Cases of this kind have really been few and far between, and even then they constitute doubtful cases of "religious susceptibility." There is a habit of fictitious agitation on religious ground which ought not to be heeded by the authorities, as there are gentlemen of all principal creeds on the Boards of Film Censors. We may refer to the following pictures which were screened without a hitch in Bombay, and objected to elsewhere on religious grounds:—

- (1) Virgin of Stamboul.
- (2) Moon of Israel.
- (3) After Six Days.
- (4) Shah Jehan (Indian).
- (5) Durga Das (Indian).
- (6) Razia Begam (Indian).

27. (a) We are opposed to the view that there is a tendency to misrepresent Western civilisation in any of the films exhibited in India. Western civilisation is not a new commodity in India. There is a steadily increasing intercourse between the East and the West, the effects of which are penetrating even the illiterate classes; and we cannot subscribe ourselves to the view that any fearful danger is likely to flow from films representing Western life.

(b) Yes, we have often seen that in foreign films Indians are generally represented as either villains or occultists or as shady characters in one role or another. Such films were not produced in India. We particularly recollect a film (foreign) which starts off with the title "In the Clutches of the Hindu."

28. We know of no films as a class shown in this country having a bad effect—

- (a) on children,
- (b) on adolescents.

29. Yes, in the case of pregnant Sex films only. In such cases, the films must be censored as "For Adults Only." As regards films other than these, it is always understood and well accepted that parents and guardians are bound to exercise the amount of care and discretion which their natural guardianship usually implies.

30. We are not at all in favour of such a sweeping restriction on what has come to be recognised as an intelligent and harmless source of recreation.

31. Yes.

32. From the point of view of this Association, we do believe that the present system of censorship, though rigid, is satisfactory. But we strongly object to the almost unpleasant and coercive methods adopted by some of the district authorities in the mofussil who do not show intelligent care before they suspend exhibition of a picture which has been passed by a Provincial Board of Censors and actually exhibited in Provincial Towns without a hitch.

33. (a) Yes, if the censorship is in any way stricter than at present.

(b), (c) Yes.

34. (a) A single Central Board, in replacement of the present Provincial Boards, is undesirable, inconvenient and impracticable.

(b) The single Central Board would inconvenience the Indian Producers in particular, and the Importers in general, because an organisation like that is bound to prove unwieldy, and inelastic.

(c) A Central Board in addition to the Provincial Boards would be preferable subject to the following:—

(c) In advocating a Central Board in addition to the Provincial Boards, as above, what this Association, after mature consideration, has in mind is this:—

The Provincial Boards primarily and finally, should be devoted to censorship of Indian pictures only, and the certificate granted by such a Provincial Board shall hold good throughout India. But in the case of an Indian-produced film that has been banned by any Provincial Board, it shall be open to the Producer concerned to appeal to the Central Board for a final decision, and in this case, such a Central decision shall hold good for the whole of India, or for such parts of India as the Central Censors may prescribe.

Developing our schemes still further, we advocate that all Foreign pictures shall firstly and finally be censored by the Central Board only, whose certificate either way, shall hold good for the whole of India, or for such parts of India as the Central Censors may prescribe. Provided, however, that this Association expressly demands that the Central Board advocated in this scheme is located in Bombay and nowhere else. This Association urges the claims of Bombay for locating the Offices of the Central Board for the reasons that, (1) Bombay is a Port of entry where the largest bulk of Foreign films is imported and thence distributed, (2) that all the principal Importers of Foreign films have their organisations in Bombay, viz., The Universal Pictures Corporation; Pathe-India; Madan Theatres, Limited. (3) that in an enlightened and cosmopolitan city like Bombay, "Urbs Prima in Indis," men and women capable of serving as members of the Central Board will be readily available, possibly without any remuneration whatsoever, and (4) that all the leading Indian Producing companies, and a majority of them are established in Bombay with their Studios.

As the scheme for the Central Board herein adumbrated provides for Foreign pictures only being examined by the Central Board, it is proposed

that there shall be an equal element of Europeans and Indians, official and non-official.

(d) As far as possible from the income derived from censoring fees as at present.

35. (a) The constitution of the present Provincial Boards is unsatisfactory without non-officials being in a clear majority. Moreover, there should be a nominee of this Trade Association on any Board of Censors, who must not, however, be culled from the Trade.

36. (a) The present system referred to in this question, under which films are ordinarily examined by an Inspector, has worked out satisfactorily. Except at the beginning, our Bombay Inspector is now well qualified out of the prolonged experience of films he has gained.

In a film-censoring officer, or Board, who must, of course be well-educated, temperamental qualifications are more necessary than purely educational ones.

(b) Under the scheme of Censorship adumbrated in answer to question No. 34 (c) above, inspection of pictures by members of the Board will be preferable and more economical.

37. (a) Yes, vide section 7 of the Act. Also there are powers vested in the Police. We strongly urge in the light of our experience that these powers must be exercised with judicious restraint, and the suspension of films must be temporary.

38. Yes, such instances can be readily obtained from the offices of the local Boards of Film Censors where registers in this behalf are maintained.

39. We have no information that such incidents have occurred. On the contrary, every film exhibited in India bears a Trailer certificate of Censorship from the country of origin or Great Britain.

40. There is not the slightest necessity of any posters, handbills and advertisements of Cinema performances being censored, inasmuch as, these are brought to public notice only after the films which they are meant to advertise, are censored. Any innovation in this direction would be a waste of public time, energy and an unwarranted encroachment on the legitimate activities of the Trade.

We have noticed no such advertisements referring to Cinema shows.

41. There is decidedly to be seen a perceptible improvement in the moral standard of the films exhibited in India in recent years—the improvement being general and from good to better and onwards.

42. A direct co-operation between the two factors referred to in this question is badly needed. It will be an asset of exceptional value to take an Importer or Producer (together with, if possible, a few other members of the Trade) into confidence before summarily refusing to certify his picture. Such confidence will more often prove excellent aid in the perplexing moments of a Board of Censors. It is hardly necessary for this Association to say that no Tradespeople can expect permanently to prosper on a constant gamble over doubtful and unclean pictures.

43. There is need of a stricter control over the import of Foreign films.

(b) So as to ensure competition of Foreign films (which are relatively cheaper in their import value) with the Indian-produced pictures on equal terms, so as to give the latter a clear headway.

(c) In our opinion, introduction of a Quota-system devoted to Indian-produced pictures would gain our objective. Such Quota-system should comprise of Indian-produced films only, or, in any case, not less than 50 per cent. of the British Empire pictures in the scheme of which Indian-produced pictures must then participate.

44. Among others, public bodies and the Press can assist in this, as in all other matters of public importance, by (1) offering judiciously to serve on the Boards of Censors, and (2) by indulging in nothing but healthy and impartial criticism from time to time.

45. (a) In the opinion of this Association, the business of film production should be allowed to stand on its own bottom, as Government control at this stage is likely, consciously or unconsciously, to cause undesirable handicap on a business so well promising to thrive under zealous private ownership.

(b) The license for storage of films operating on all Studios as at present, suffices.

## APPENDIX.

*Letter from the Bombay Cinema and Theatres Trade Association, Bombay, dated 28th October 1922, to the Chairman, Select Committee, on the Bombay Entertainments Duty Act, Poona.*

Inasmuch as Bill No. XX of 1922 (being an Act to impose a duty in respect of Admission to Entertainments in the Presidency of Bombay) is referred to a Select Committee, we have the honour on behalf of the Bombay Cinema and Theatres Trade Association to apply for permission to offer, for evidence, representatives of the Cinema and Theatres Trade whose "special interest" will be affected by the passage of the present Bill into law. We understand that it is optional to your committee under the Standing Orders (Blue Book) Clause 6, Sub-clause 4, at page 11, to hear such evidence, which, if exercised in favour of the representatives of the Cinema and Theatres Trade in the present case, will give you a representation on the lines herein-after indicated.

Representatives of our Trade have already tendered in Council, a printed document of protest through the Hon'ble Dr. Dadachanji, objecting to the present legislation being introduced in Bombay, having regard to the vital facts concerning the trade which have not been previously ascertained by Government. As, however, the principle of the Bill remains accepted, the members are now ready to elucidate, under the Standing Orders, the following points, *inter alia*, before the Select Committee:—

(1) That the Cinema and Theatre Trade, of all other entertainments interests contemplated by the Bill, being the most frequent to come under the present legislation, the Select Committee will be well advised to adjust that the basis of taxation should be the capacity of the industry to bear such taxation and not merely with which the tax can be collected.

(2) That the popularity of the Cinema and the Theatre, in so far as it is really so, being due to the cheap and convenient admission rates, and the increasing overhead and establishment charges which in modern times have risen to an increase of 300 per cent. considering, it is vitally necessary, at the present stage of the legislation to modify the incidence of the taxation as formulated in section 3 of the Bill, after allowing a clear exemption of seats, admission to which may be up to and including 12 annas. The Bengal Entertainments Duty Act, recently in operation, provides for exemption of the lower classes of admission, and members of this Association would recommend, without prejudice to their objection to the Tax as a whole, an alternative Schedule in place of that in section 3 of the Bill. The Schedule we propose is as below:—

There shall be no quota of taxation on admission up to and including 12 annas (in Bombay 8 annas and 12 annas being the lowest classes of admission in theatres). Then, where the payment, excluding the amount of the duty—

exceeds 12 annas, but does not exceed Re. 1— $\frac{1}{2}$  anna.

exceeds Re. 1, but does not exceed Rs. 2—1 anna.

exceeds Rs. 2, but does not exceed Rs. 3—2 annas.

exceeds Rs. 3, but does not exceed Rs. 5—4 annas.

exceeds Rs. 5, but does not exceed Rs. 8—8 annas.

exceeds Rs. 8, but does not exceed Rs. 10—12 annas.

exceeds Rs. 10, for the first ten rupees and for every ten rupees or part of ten rupees over ten rupees—one rupee.

(3) That consistently with their fears based on experiences of similar taxation in other countries, and with their objection to the Tax as a whole, members of the Cinema and Theatres Trade who have in a large majority of cases to protect the interests on their borrowings intend bearing the brunt of the taxation themselves without letting it fall on the public. The Select Committee will, therefore, be specially urged without prejudice to the suggestion made by us in the document tendered in Council, at page 2, enumeration 7 and the succeeding paragraph thereto, to adopt the alternative Schedule proposed in para. 2 herein, in revision of that contained in section 3 of the bill.

(4) That, if, as proposed in section 7 (2) of the Bill, soldiers, Europeans and Indian, be exempted from liability to pay the Tax, similar concession be made in the case of children of the school-going age who find a place of education and useful instructions in a Moving Picture house, more surely after the various Board of Film Censors recently inaugurated in India, including the Bombay Presidency.

(5) That if the Government of Bombay have been endeavouring to secure funds for public utility that are undoubtedly in a bad way, through taxing the Entertainments, which, wherever else so, have been taxed in abnormal times alone, the preamble to the proposed Bill must clearly define the probable length of the duration of the law. This, we venture to submit, will serve to give the right face to the intentions of Government in taxing a trade like the entertainment under stress or want of finance, and to give hopes of better times to the members of the trade concerned.

(6) That the penal sections of the Bill appear to the members of the Cinema and Theatres trade, the operation of the Act on whom will be a daily occurrence, as unduly severe, and are calculated to act as a terror on their patrons who, it must be remembered, primarily seek amusement. A dishonest or negligent ticket-vendor, or an unscrupulous member of the public, supposing the Bill is not changed on that point, may make a proprietor liable to a fine of a thousand rupees and more in a single night. Taking, therefore, the analogy of the Income-tax, the fine on the person visiting should not exceed twice the amount of the price of the ticket with the quota of tax payable, and the fine on the proprietor should in no case exceed a like penalty.

(7) That ample provision will have to be made for the issuing of complimentary passes without the tax to various persons, businesses, and the members of the staff—a practice usual for many reasons, with the Cinema and Theatres Trade.

(8) That members of the Cinema and Theatres trade in any case object to the use of turnstiles and similar mechanical devices which are impracticable and a drag on business and are not in use even in Cinemas and Theatres in Europe and elsewhere. Such devices may be found practicable in places of entertainment other than the Cinema and Theatre where the entrance and the exit are specially under the Police and the Fire Officers' requirements, and under periodical inspections by these departments to assure safety in exigencies like outbreak of fire.

(9) On the point of collecting the tax, section 4 of the Bill, members would emphasise, without prejudice to their objection to the tax as a whole, and to the suggestion contained in the document of protest tendered in Council (page 2, enumeration 7 and the succeeding paragraph thereto) that any method that is likely to be enforced for collecting the tax should be as little irksome to the management and the public, as possible, and with due regard to the sanctity of the trade. For this reason, members of the trade would propose that a good method of collecting the Tax would be a duty enjoined on the part of each proprietor to forward to the collecting authorities a lump sum calculated under the schedule of taxation on all tickets sold each night subject to the actual sale of tickets and the amount of taxation



received being checked by officials duly authorised under section 8 of the Bill.

These, Sir, would be the grounds which members of the Cinema and Theatres Trade Association intend to elucidate in their representation before the Select Committee, given an opportunity to do so. We have, therefore, the honour to request you to place this before the Committee for decision.

**Oral Evidence of Rao Sahib CHUNILAL G. MUNIM, J. P., Mr. RUSTOM C. N. BHARUCHA, Mr. N. DESAI (Producer), and Mr. NURSEWANJEE N. ENGINEER, representing the Bombay Cinema and Theatres Trades Association, on Sunday, the 6th November 1927.**

*Chairman:* I am very glad to meet you, gentlemen. We have chosen Bombay as the place for our first sitting because we know the Cinema industry plays a great part in this province and we hope with your help to receive much enlightenment on the very difficult questions which are before this Committee. We are sorry to have to trouble you on a holiday but we are pressed for time as we have got to go over the whole country and you will forgive us for that. We are very thankful to you for having appeared to-day. Some of us have only arrived to-day and we have not had much time to go through the very illuminating memorandum which you have placed before the Committee. The procedure I propose to adopt to-day is to have a general statement from you as to the various points raised and, if you have no objection, meeting on another day when the members will seek further enlightenment from you after they have seen the places where pictures are produced and also some cinema shows. We hope to have every assistance from the citizens of Bombay. We are staying here till the 18th and although we have not received answers to our Questionnaire in sufficient numbers we hope to receive them yet. There is no time limit; we will take them till the last day we sit here. We shall be glad to have as much assistance as possible from the Bombay public in this matter.

I understand, Rao Sahib, that you represent the Bombay Cinema and Theatres Trades Association and the Indian Motion Pictures Association.

*Mr. Chunilal:* I am representing both the Associations but they also want to be examined orally.

*Chairman:* We shall be quite glad to take your statement either jointly or separately.

*Mr. Chunilal:* So far as producing is concerned they will be happy to give their own views in addition to what I have said in my written statement. I have given them the privilege of doing so and I hope you will also be good enough to give them the opportunity.

*Chairman:* I may also mention for the benefit of those who appear before the Committee that if anybody wants their evidence taken in camera we are quite prepared to do so on their expressing such a wish; otherwise the evidence will be given in public. Who represents the producers here?

*R. S. Chunilal:* Mr. Desai.

*Chairman:* If I may explain one other point, when members examine you you should not understand it in the light of a cross-examination in a court. That is not our object here. We want enlightenment and members put you questions in order to get more light; so please do not misunderstand us because we are all here on a common public purpose.

*Mr. Desai:* So far as we are concerned there is no chance of a misunderstanding.

*Chairman:* Do not misunderstand questions put by members; we are not cross-examining you but merely seeking information because we ourselves

are in need of much light on a subject like this. Would you like to make any general statement, *Rag Sahab*, on the memorandum you have placed before us or make any addition to what you have stated there?

*R. S. Chunilal*: In the first place, we would like to know in what connection you want me to make a statement?

*Chairman*: Very well, may I lead you on then? So far as I have read your memorandum, I find—if I am wrong tell me so—that you seem to be generally satisfied with the existing conditions in all aspects of the cinema industry. Am I right?

*A*. The industry being in its infancy I think we have to be satisfied with what we have got at present. We have a demand for good improved films no doubt but like novices in this line the people go to see Indian productions and I find that there is some improvement.

*Chairman*: You mean some improvement is needed?

*Mr. Chunilal*: Yes, further improvement is needed.

*Chairman*: On reading your memorandum it struck me that you were generally satisfied.

*Mr. Chunilal*: We are satisfied so far as the existing circumstances are concerned. But we have not got much scope at present for developing the industry. For this one particular reason is that in India there is the difficulty of different languages and customs prevailing in different parts of India. All these things come in the way of our getting a return on the money we spend on the negative. Our scope generally is confined to the Presidency where the particular production is made. Even then, taking the Bombay presidency for instance if we make a production here with Gujarati dresses, in Poona, Sitara or Nasik that production would not be so much appreciated as on the Gujarati side. If again a production is made in Calcutta and exhibited in Bombay, people remark "why is there no turban, nothing on the head?" and so on—and naturally people would not appreciate such a production to the same extent as a production made in the same province; and for that reason we cannot further develop this industry unless some arrangement for Government help is made by which such a production can be made as could be appreciated throughout India. The language is the principal difficulty. We have to translate titles. Suppose a production is made here, we have to have its titles in the Gujarati language or in Hindi. Then again if it is to be sent to Madras we want Madrassi-Telugu, or whatever it may be, titles. If again it is to be sent to Calcutta we have to change the translation and put it in Bengali—or if Burma, of course, Burmese. In making these translations we generally mar the beauty of the picture or story. That is the general complaint of the Americans too. They make a picture and while translating it into German or any other language they do not produce the same effect as they do in America.

*Mr. A. M. Green*: You mean it damages the film or interferes with the story?

*Mr. Chunilal*: The production and the story also. It is not understood in exactly the same spirit as that in which it is produced.

*Mr. K. C. Neogy*: Do I understand you to say that title writing is an art which does not lend itself very easily to translation?

*Mr. Chunilal*: Generally speaking yes.

*Colonel Crawford*: The producer is really confined to one province—that is the only market in which you can show your productions?

*Mr. Chunilal*: At present though we get very little outside the province we do show them with translations; but the return we get is very little.

*Colonel Crawford*: A film produced in Bengal would not draw here?

*Mr. Chunilal*: No, it would not draw as much as say a film that is made here and shown in Bombay. That crowd you cannot expect in any other province. These are the main difficulties we have to face in developing this industry in India.

*Sir Ibrahim Haroon Jaffer:* You mean to say that those things which are rejected in other parts of India are rejected owing to the language difficulty?

A. No, some out of religious objections and some for other reasons.

*Chairman:* By "rejected" you mean not popular with the public?

A. No, they are not rejected for that. I am showing generally how in this industry there is no scope for further development at present. We have got other reasons in addition but this is the principal reason. I do not think that any Studio or Foreign Company coming in here would be able to make as much money in this country as in any other country in the world. On account of the difficulties I have mentioned they will have to confine themselves to one province and sometimes even half a province.

Q. Is not Hindi generally known throughout these parts?

A. As a matter of fact these Indian films are mostly seen by illiterate people.

Q. Then there is no question of language.

A. No. I mean supposing I am a Gujarati I may understand Gujarati; I may not understand Marathi. Our ladies cannot read Hindi or Marathi.

Q. Any way in my experience Bombay pictures are very popular in Madras.

*Mr. Desai:* Only mythological pictures. Other pictures are not so popular in Madras.

*R. S. Chunilal:* In Madras we get a total of about Rs. 5,000 only on a picture as hire; while in Bombay Presidency we get Rs. 15,000. In comparison to that we get nothing. So if you can have a mixed production in which part can be shown in Madras and part in Bengali, that will be very encouraging; but for that you must have a general studio.

Q. You mean a central studio in which all can be combined.

A. Not a central studio but a story in which matters pertaining to all the different provinces may be brought in so that the films may be of universal interest in India.

*Colonel Crawford:* Are you alluding only to films of social life. But take a historical film—would not that appeal to all India?

A. We have produced historical films but history is not known to the uneducated people in other provinces. Now we have made a film about Shivaji here but in other provinces Shivaji may not be known at all. I mean to say to uneducated people in other provinces.

*Chairman:* That is one difficulty you feel as regards production. What else have you in mind?

A. So for the development of the industry I suggest that we should try to capture a foreign market somewhere.

Q. You think Indian pictures should be improved to such an extent that we can get a foreign market somewhere?

A. Yes.

Q. You mean competing with other pictures there?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think you would be able to produce under present conditions pictures of such a type?

A. Not under present conditions. Not unless we directly import cameramen, etc., from abroad to train our own men here.

Q. What are the things you would like to have? In order to encourage Indian productions so as to make them attractive to the foreign market, what are the things you would like to have?

A. We must have trained men from abroad and train people here. Those who are already in the line at present simply get this education by seeing the films. They have no opportunity for seeing any foreign studios. Indian producers, directors and all such people have no idea actually how these things are done abroad. We started the Oriental Film Company in 1918; and the late Mr. Suchet Singh was the Managing Director. He

received education in this line for 5 years in America. He studied at different studios and became a director and cameraman. He came out here and we started our Company here. He made arrangements with our Corporation for sending out cameramen and directors. He came out here and we started the Company. We made some productions when unfortunately he died and the Company had to go into liquidation because nobody else could take charge of it.

Q. Well, what would you suggest for that purpose?

A. I think it is better for the advancement of this industry that we should have experts from abroad to train these people. In the first place that is a necessity. We have not got even an up-to-date studio here. When you see these studios you will see for yourselves. We have not got proper studios here, otherwise the conditions in India are good. As regards scenes, we have got natural scenery. They have to spend thousands of rupees to make their scenes which we have ready made here. Productions made with the help of those experts would be far cheaper than if they were made in America or England or anywhere else.

Q. Do you think sending for experts alone will be enough or do you think it is necessary to send people abroad in order to get the necessary knowledge?

A. Sending people abroad will not be a very advisable thing to do because they may go there and they may get their training—say two or three people, and when they come out here, what about the actors and actresses? You cannot send one particular batch and have one company only. It is better to import them, as I suggest, out here and take regular training from them here.

Q. What prevents the people interested in the industry doing it—sending for these experts from abroad?

A. Well, I think there are financial considerations which Mr. Nanabhai can explain.

Q. At any rate so far as production is concerned, do you want to do anything else? I daresay other members would like to know more from you later on this subject. Now as regards distribution have you got anything to say?

A. We do not find any difficulty in this matter except in Bengal and in some parts of the North-West Frontier Province where Madan Theatres have a monopoly. They do not take others pictures, nor do they take any films made in India. They import American and other continental films from abroad and exhibit them. They make large contracts according to their requirements.

Q. Have Madans got a monopoly in this province too?

A. Yes, they have a monopoly here as well. They have got about 8 theatres in Bombay out of a total number of 18 theatres.

Q. Do you mean to say that Madan does not exhibit any other films but distributes and exhibits his own films? Do you mean that he exhibits his own films in his theatres and distributes only such films in which he is interested?

A. Yes. That is so.

Q. What is your objection to that?

A. My objection is this. The Indian producing companies do not get any advantage, that is to say, they do not get any return from the whole of Bengal, because in Calcutta there is not a single theatre belonging to others. All the theatres are owned and managed by Madans.

Colonel Crawford: There are others too.

Sir Ibrahim Haroon Jaffer: Won't Madans take the pictures produced by other companies in India?

A. They won't.

Chairman: Do Madans produce Indian pictures too?

A. Yes. Of course, sometimes they take a few pictures from Kohinoor, and a few from the Sharda Film Co. They are not taking any films from the Imperial or the Hindustan Co.

Q. Then you say that the producers labour under the difficulty of finding a proper distribution?

A. Yes, they find that difficulty throughout India.

Q. What do you suggest should be done to improve matters?

A. What can we do? We can't do anything.

Sir Haroon Jaffer: Do you suggest that legislation should be undertaken so that there may not be any monopoly?

A. Yes, we want legislation to prevent monopoly, because without such legislation independent trade people will have no business at all.

Q. Have you got anything more to add under the head of distribution?

A. I have nothing more to add to what I have already said.

Q. Now, have you anything to add under the head of Exhibition beyond what you have stated in your written memorandum?

A. I have already said everything that I had to say in the memorandum.

Q. Now, as regards the distribution of foreign films, are there any difficulties felt?

A. There is not much difficulty felt in the matter of distributing foreign films, because Madans take films from other companies. Only the best films are imported into this country now a days. Formerly serials were imported, but since the Indian films have come into prominence, serials are not imported to such a large extent as before. Now-a-days moral films and dramas are imported, and Madans too like to take them.

Q. Is there not a complaint that in sending you films, they send out indifferent films along with good ones. I mean indifferent and rejected films or second and third rate films are sent out to India along with a few good ones?

A. I have no experience of that, because I am not an importer in the true sense of the word. I am merely an Agent. I have got a branch here, and they send out only those films that I indent for. But in the Block system they may be sending a few such because we are purchasing the whole lot.

Q. You say that the Block system as such is non-existent in this country? Is it so?

A. This refers only to Indian production.

Q. Is there not a "Block system" in force in regard to foreign films?

A. We merely order out films from the advertisements that are sent out, and we have no chance to see the pictures first.

Q. Then I suppose you would like to modify your statement in regard to your answer to question No. 10? You say "But the 'blind' booking and the 'first run' or 'key theatres' systems are practised. These systems being purely a trade facility practised by trades people among themselves, there are no advantages or disadvantages to the Trade or the people". I suppose you would like to modify your answer to this question, is it not?

Mr. K. C. Neogy: Your answers relate only to Indian made films, is it not?

A. Yes, certainly.

Chairman: As regards foreign films, the "Block" system and "blind" booking do exist, and they are not advantageous either to the trade or to the people, am I correct?

A. There are both advantages as well as disadvantages.

Q. Which outweighs, the advantages or the disadvantages?

A. We order out films from the synopsis or advertisements sent out to us. Sometimes the films turn out to be very good though we may have paid very little for them.

Q. Do you mean that they dump other pictures on you of their own choice along with those which you have actually ordered?

A. That is not the system at all. They send out to us pictures according to our contract. We have got a contract for a particular brand of pictures, and we get those pictures.

Q. I thought you said that if you order out A, they send you B, C and D also?

A. Generally, if it is a good picture they thrust on us two or three more when we make a contract with foreign companies, and we have no option in that matter.

Q. Will it not come to this then, that inferior films which are not wanted in their own country will be sent out to India?

A. Yes, there is that possibility.

Q. Is it not an actuality and not merely a possibility?

A. I cannot answer that. I would rather leave it to others to answer.

Q. Do you wish to say anything as regards No. 11, that is to say, previewing by trades people?

A. No.

Q. Do you consider that Indian films are sufficiently produced to meet the demand in the country. I see that one of your answers is to that effect.

A. At present in Bombay there are three theatres which show exclusively Indian productions. They take on each two weeks. Now Kohinoor, Sharda and Krishna are each making 12 films in a year, and each film is run for two weeks, and thus they take 72 weeks. Similarly the Imperial is producing about 15 films in a year and they are run for about 30 weeks. Maharashtra Film Company is making about six films, the Excelsior and others are making about 20 every year. Altogether there are enough films which will keep these theatres busy for 134 weeks. In addition to that, on holidays they repeat some of these pictures relating to mythological subjects. On the whole, considering the number of Cinemas in this country, I think the supply is quite enough.

Q. I suppose you are talking of the city of Bombay?

A. Yes.

Q. What about the provinces?

A. Of course, in the provinces they have to run a film for a whole week. In some small stations there are two or three cinemas, but in any case not more than in Bombay. On the whole at present there is 134 weeks' supply.

Q. You say that is sufficient to meet the demands of the whole country or do you think there is scope for more?

Sir Haroon Jaffer: There are nearly 350 cinemas in the country?

A. But there are not more than three cinemas in other places running Indian productions.

Q. Do they take these films in turns?

A. Yes.

Q. You said that there is no scope for further output?

A. It all depends upon the appreciation of the public.

Q. Will not the public like to see the better class of films that you produce instead of seeing third and fourth class of foreign films?

A. Yes, certainly so.

Q. In that way, do you consider there is sufficient scope for further improvement?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think the trade is sufficiently well organised in order to meet the requirements of the people?

A. I don't think so.

**Q.** Have you any suggestions to make as to what should be done to improve matters?

**A.** Capital is wanted. People must improve the quality of the pictures too, and there must be variety in pictures. They cannot stick to one type of pictures, but they must produce a variety of pictures.

**Q.** Is your answer to No. 11 confined to Indian productions like No. 10?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** What have you to say as regards foreign films? Would you like to have an agency abroad in order to preview these films before they are imported into this country? Wherefrom do they come? Do they come from England or direct from America?

**A.** They come direct from America and not through England. They are mostly landed in Bombay and Calcutta.

**Q.** Who takes these American films mostly, Bombay or Calcutta?

**A.** Bombay.

**Q.** Have you any suggestions to make as regards previewing these foreign films?

**A.** The exhibitors do pre-view these foreign films, but the importers have no chance of doing so.

**Mr. K. C. Neogy:** You mean that the exhibitors preview these films after their arrival in India?

**A.** Yes.

**Chairman:** You mean that the importers enter into a contract and so they have no chance to preview the films, while the exhibitors have an opportunity to preview the foreign films, is that so? They want to see the picture before they book it?

**Colonel Crawford:** The distributor gets the films from America and gives them to the exhibitor?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Is any loss suffered by the trade by the distributors not being allowed to preview the pictures?

**A.** I am not an importer, and so I cannot answer it. I am only the Agent of the Universal Picture Corporation. That question is to be answered by the importers.

**Chairman:** Are there any importers here? Has anybody come here today?

**A.** Mr. Kooka was to have come, but he is sick. You will meet him in Calcutta. Mr. Hague belonging to Pathes will probably come before you.

**Q.** You say that the "Block" system is practically non-existent here, but the "blind booking" and the "first run" "key theatres" systems are practised. Does your answer apply to Indian films or does it apply to foreign films also?

**A.** It applies to both.

**Colonel Crawford:** You say there are three Indian theatres in Bombay which exclusively show Indian films. Has any theatre got the right to show a film first or can these films be shown in all the theatres simultaneously?

**A.** Only one theatre has got the right to show the productions of each concern. After that theatre has shown it, the film is released for the other theatres. The exhibitors make a contract with the producers for a year's output and the exhibitors have to take that output.

**Q.** Are these contracts in writing?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Can you supply the Committee with copies of such contracts?

**A.** Yes, we will send them on to you.

**Q.** Do the exhibitors help the producers financially in producing Indian films?

A. No, they don't do so.

*Chairman:* I see you are complaining about the Entertainment Tax. Has there been any fall in consequence of the Entertainments Tax?

A. Mr. Nursewanjee will be able to answer because he is an exhibitor.

Q. I don't understand your statement in reply to No. 12. You say that in the middle of the performance the police authorities carry on some checking. What do you mean by it?

A. I have got personal experience about it in Ahmedabad. I went there once to see a circus, but just in the middle of the show an Inspector came round and began to examine the tickets of the spectators. Some of my friends asked why the show had been stopped, why an examination of the tickets was being carried on by a police official, and if there was anything wrong with the proprietor. So the whole show was stopped for about 12 or 13 minutes. Then again a similar thing occurred in Surat also. I was there to witness a drama, and just in the middle of the show an Inspector came round and began to examine the tickets. Perhaps there was some trouble between the proprietor and the Inspector.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* Does it apply to Cinema theatres or to Dramatic theatres as well?

A. This sort of checking applies to both.

*Chairman:* Probably to see whether the duty had been levied?

A. Yes, and also to see if more persons than a reasonable number with complimentary passes are let in. But what I say is from my personal experience and from what I saw in Surat and Ahmedabad.

Q. Coming to Question No. 13, I find it somewhat difficult to follow what you say there. You say "On the contrary, such tariff is highly prejudicial to the producers and exhibitors of Indian films. The remedy for this should be as we have suggested in our answer to No. 43 below". What is your idea? You say it is trivial.

A. It cannot be said that the tariff is too low. In our Association the argument that was urged by the producers was that if the duty were raised, we would be able to run the Indian pictures better in such theatres which were exhibiting foreign films.

Q. Do I understand there are certain theatres where only foreign pictures are shown and they won't take any Indian pictures?

A. In Bombay there are the Excelsior, the Wellington, the Empire, and one or two others which exclusively run foreign films.

Q. Why don't they combine and show Indian pictures?

A. They would lose their audience if they were to show Indian films.

Q. Do you mean that if they show Indian films, the audience will be less or will the exhibition of Indian films drive out the audience?

A. It depends upon the merit of the picture. Most of the educated classes, and some Europeans and Parsees may not like to see a Hindu film relating to mythology. Of course, some of the theatres that I have just mentioned have not tried the experiment, but I know that the Empress tried the Naldamayanti film, and they got about Rs. 12,000. Then they tried to show the same film in the Excelsior, and they hardly got about Rs. 50 a day.

*Colonel Crawford:* Do you think it was a good film and popular with the cinema goers?

A. It did well in the Empress Theatre. If it brought about Rs. 12,000 in one it should have given a reasonably fair income in the Excelsior, but it did not. The collections were very poor.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* Don't you think it would be desirable to compel the theatre proprietors to exhibit Indian films only?

A. There is no use of compulsion in these matters. If there is money to be made by showing American, German or any other films, the exhibitors will certainly show them.



*Chairman:* I don't suppose Europeans dislike seeing Indian scenes; but on the other hand, they would very much appreciate them, is it not so?

*A.* We are merely guided by the present situation. We have no idea as to whether Europeans would appreciate Indian films or not.

*Q.* Much remains in the way of improving the art, is it not so?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* What suggestions have you to make in order to improve the art?

*A.* I have told you already that you must have good men from abroad, good cameras, etc.

*Q.* Have you anything to add to your answer to Question No. 17?

*A.* No, I have nothing to add.

*Q.* I think you might like to modify your answer to Question No. 19 in view of what you said a few minutes ago that the advantages of the conditions here in this country are so great that it would be cheaper to produce films in this country.

*A.* That answer dealt with foreign films. We compared the cost of production of foreign films.

*Q.* Conditions here are favourable for cheap production?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Do you think actors and actresses can be had in plenty, as you say here? I have heard it said that you cannot get good actresses.

*A.* As an importer I would rather not say anything about it.

*Q.* I have heard it said that it would be very difficult to get good actors and actresses from respectable society.

*A.* Oh yes, that would be a difficulty.

*Q.* Have you any suggestion to make that would remove this difficulty?

*A.* It depends on the type of people that get into the business.

*Q.* Do you think educated ladies would be available?

*A.* If well-reputed companies are started on this basis.

*Q.* Certainly in Bombay it should be easy. But last week in Bombay when I attended a cinema—I was told that it would be very difficult to get actresses from a respectable class of people.

*A.* I think there is not a single actress.

*Q.* Have you any suggestion to make how to attract educated ladies?

*A.* I think if good respectable people can get into the business, respectable ladies would like to come and work there.

*Q.* You seem to be satisfied with the censorship. In fact you seem to think it is too strict. Whereas there have been loud complaints (you must have noticed) that the censorship is rather lax. What is your opinion about it?

*A.* The censorship is quite reasonable at present, so far as Bombay is concerned.

*Q.* Of course, you know the bulk of the censorship is done in Bombay. That is why we are anxious to get the opinion of the Bombay people. There have been very loud complaints, especially in the matter of sex and criminally suggestive films, that the censorship is inadequate.

*A.* There may have been in the beginning but not now. They have got very strict rules and regulations for the guidance of the inspector.

*Q.* But you think that neither the machinery nor the methods require any improvement?

*A.* I do not think they require any improvement.

*Q.* But you do suggest that a Central Board would be preferable?

*A.* Yes, I suggest that.

**Q.** But how do you meet the objection as to the delay that will be entailed. If you have a central board dealing with all films in Bombay, surely it will entail delay for people in Bengal, Madras and Burma?

**A.** I think the main importers are in Bombay. Our office is here. Pathe's office is here, and Madan's organisation is here. So they are all here; and Mr. Kooka of the Globe Theatres too, while he has got a cinema in Calcutta and Rangoon, has got his organisation here also. All the films are shown in Bombay first. Most of them can simultaneously release a copy in Calcutta and here.

**Q.** You in the trade are most interested. I should like to have your considered opinion on the point. It is a very important subject. Do you think that the trade will not suffer if you have only one central board to deal with all films?

**A.** The trade won't suffer. But I want the provincial boards also for local productions.

**Q.** That is another matter. But as regards imported films?

**A.** Well, most of them, even Pathe's and Madan's Theatre, have got their offices here and it would be very convenient for them if films are passed in one place.

**Q.** You also advocate that all films should be landed in one port—in the port of Bombay.

**A.** Yes. That all foreign films should come through one port.

**Q.** Of course it will be very profitable to Bombay merchants no doubt.

**A.** But even if they import in Calcutta they can send a copy here. Generally, we get three copies of each film and we distribute them immediately. One we retain for the Board of Censors here. As soon as it is passed, we show it in Bombay. But for the other copy by giving the certificate number they can arrange for its exhibition in Calcutta or any other station. So I think wherever they are imported, copies of the films will have to be sent to Bombay for exhibition. At present the main importers are in Bombay.

**Q.** Why don't you then accept the position that all films should be imported through Bombay? What is your objection to that?

**A.** I don't think there is any objection to that.

**Q.** Do you think it will entail any hardship on the trade?

**A.** No, because they can only ask for one copy to be sent to Bombay port, and advertising materials can go to Calcutta or anywhere else. They would only want one print of it.

**Q.** I will come to advertising presently. You want a central board with a non-official censorship. That is your idea?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Do you think you can get enough men of experience to do the work?

**A.** In Bombay we can get them.

**Q.** Do you think you can get men? How many people do you think would be required to do the work for the central board—supposing they worked through the week?

**A.** I can't give an idea unless I know the number of films that are being examined in Calcutta and Madras at present. There are not very many in Madras, most are examined in Calcutta and Bombay.

**Q.** Do you think you will be able to get respectable men in the city of Bombay with sufficient leisure to take up this work?

**A.** Why not? I think we ought to be able to get them.

**Q.** There is some doubt expressed on that point. That is why I am asking you with your local knowledge if you think you will get respectable people to take up this job. It will entail hard work.

**A.** I don't think it will entail hard work. Most of them are willing to see the pictures. Of course the present rule of inspecting pictures in the day time may entail some sort of hardship because the films are not intended

to be seen in daylight. But if at night time a separate room or hall is kept for exhibiting pictures for inspection, it would get over the difficulty.

*Q.* You suggest that if the Central Board is to come into existence, they should have a theatre of their own, where they can see these pictures. Now the procedure is that the inspector chooses his place. You think it would be an advantage to have a central theatre for the Central Board to inspect these things?

*A.* Yes, that will be very advantageous. And I would advise them to receive the applications and to divide them among the members. I don't want the exhibitors or the importers to know who are examining the films.

*Q.* You would prefer an examination by the members of the Board rather than by the inspectors?

*A.* For the Central Board.

*Q.* Now, the present practice is that most of the work is done by inspectors. But you would prefer the work to be done by a board of people. What would be the smallest number you would advocate? How many censors would you have to pass the film?

*A.* One man does it now. I should say four. And as the Central Board will be for foreign films, I would suggest the following composition for the board—two Europeans, one Hindu and one Muhammadan.

*Mr. Green:* But are all four of them to see each film?

*A.* Yes. Each film should be seen by a group of four.

*Chairman:* What is your object in suggesting that there should be two Europeans?

*A.* Well, as the Board will be dealing with foreign films, Europeans will be expected to know more about western conditions.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* Would you like to have a lady among the four?

*A.* That is for the Government to decide. I do not think so.

*Chairman:* Do you think the trade would welcome any addition to the charges levied for censoring or registering films? You see if you have a central board, it will mean additional cost. Would the trade bear that?

*A.* It will have to be worked out. I do not think it will entail greater cost.

*Q.* Supposing it does?

*A.* There are four boards at present, including the Burma Board. There will be one central board instead of all these four provincial boards.

*Q.* But you say the provincial boards are necessary along with the Central Board?

*A.* Yes, but for the provincial boards I do not think there will be much work. I would confine them to dealing with productions produced in the provinces. So there won't be much work for them.

*Q.* You seem to think the cinema has not affected any portion of the public or had any demoralising effect either on the youths of the country or the criminally inclined people. Is there not a complaint that some films have a demoralising effect?

*A.* Well, all the films are passed by the censors.

*Q.* They are passed by the censors but is there not a loud complaint from Indians that youths are spoiled by seeing some of these films?

*A.* Do you mean complaints by a responsible body or anybody rushing to the papers and making a complaint?

*Q.* Is there not a general impression that the youths of the country are spoiled by going to the cinema shows where sex life is shown in semi-nude dress and in kissing scenes?

*A.* The complaint may be because we have got different customs here.

*Q.* That may be so. I can speak for Madras. But I want to know what is the natural state of things in Bombay.

A. I don't find any such complaints in Bombay.

Q. I know one prominent gentleman in this town who says he would make a radical alteration in this respect. I wish to know, is there a general complaint of that sort, that this has a demoralising effect especially on impressionable adolescents?

A. Well, my written memorandum gives an answer to this question.

Q. You seem to be satisfied with the existing state of things so far as one can judge from your answer to question No. 4. You don't think there is any such demoralising effect?

A. I don't think so.

Q. Nor are criminal instincts fostered by going to the cinemas? Is that also your opinion?

A. We don't think that criminal instincts are fostered by going to the cinemas.

Q. I wish to understand your answer to No. 25. You mean that ordinary people—we won't call them illiterate, but not belonging to the middle class—you mean to say they do not go to these theatres where foreign films are shown? Is that what you mean by your answer?

A. Yes, they do not go. Uneducated people do not visit such cinemas at all.

Q. You do not think western films are favoured by the labouring class? They don't care to go to them?

\* *Sir Haroon Jaffer*: They used to go when there were no Indian productions.

A. Yes, but now the bulk of them go to Indian productions. Formerly they used to go and see fighting or any exciting films, or comic films.

Q. Now that Indian films are produced, you think the attendance at foreign films of a social nature is falling?

A. Yes.

*Chairman*: In answer to 27 (a)—have you been to any western countries?

A. No, none of us.

Q. So you cannot speak from personal knowledge whether there is misrepresentation. But surely you recognise, Rao Sahib, that there is a difference between seeing a cinema show and seeing the people. A cinema show attracts a crowd, whereas you seem to think in your answer No. 27 that the intercourse between the east and the west is now becoming increasingly frequent and you say you cannot subscribe yourself to the view that there is any danger in it. That is not the complaint. The complaint is that western civilisation is not properly represented to the people of this country and moreover the outlook of the people of this country is different, so that they say it has a bad effect, whereas on a western audience the thing would have no effect because they are accustomed to that sort of thing. We have a social outlook different from the westerners. For instance, grown-up sisters we do not kiss. Our habits are different and our social standards are different. What they complain of is that western civilisation so presented to an eastern audience produces an effect on the mind of the easterner which lowers the westerner in a way in his eyes. It is not so much a question of impropriety as a question of the effect it has on the eastern mind as regards the characteristics of the western people. I mean according to their own standards it is all right. There is nothing objectionable. But from the point of view of the easterner, it is objectionable since he sees certain things which give him a wrong view of western life. That is what the general complaint is. What is your view about it and what is the general view about it?

A. I do not know what the public think of course.

Q. Do you think there is any general disrespect created to the westerner in the mind of the easterner by seeing these western lives depicted on the screen?

A. Among the educated classes I do not think that impression is created. And these films are generally seen by the educated.

Q. But what about the effect on the uneducated classes?

A. They do not go to see social dramas because they cannot understand them.

Q. So that you do not think there is any real danger of that sort?

A. Personally, I do not think there is.

*Colonel Crawford:* Do you think the difference in dress of European ladies as shown on the film affects the Indian at all? His women folk dress quite differently. You do not think it brings them into disrepute? I mean the customs of dress of the women in the west, are they not likely to bring women of the west into disrepute among Indians?

A. In what way? How can that be? They are seeing them every day here. Unless it is indelicate, and then it is a different thing. Even in India there are certain places where the dresses are hardly decent. If the Bombay people were to go to Dharmpur in the jungles, they would find women almost naked. I do not think western dress is such as to have any bad effect on our ladies.

Q. Is your opinion that all this life in the cabarets, which appears so often in the film, is the normal life of the west?

A. Well, I have not been there. We see them in the film.

Q. Do you think what is shown in the films is an actual representation of what is lived in the west. Is the picture fairly true to life?

A. Well, if you don't visit them, you must take it as true.

*Chairman:* Now, as regards 27 (b)—where did you see these films in which Indians are generally represented either as occultists or villains or shady characters?

A. You will get this information from the Board of Censors. They have cut those films in many cases.

Q. Are they shown to the public? You say we have even seen, etc.

A. The Hope Diamond Mystery I think was screened. But I cannot give you full details of the films now.

Q. I should like to know more about it. If really they were shown on foreign films exhibited here in this country, you may give it to us next time. There is no hurry about it. We should like to have more information on that point.

That would be one of the cases where censorship has not been adequate.

That is all I propose to trouble you with to-day, on the general lines, unless other members desire to ask you questions. We are going to trouble you again after we have seen all these places.

*Mr. Neogy:* We reserve our questions for the time being.

*Chairman:* That is my suggestion. All of us will have an opportunity. I have not exhausted my questions.

*Mr. Neogy:* We have not put ours at all

*Chairman:* The producers would like to be examined separately?

*Mr. Bharucha:* Yes.

Q. What date will suit you?

*Mr. Bharucha:* Whenever it suits you.

Q. Would Thursday suit you? 10-30 A.M.?

*Mr. Bharucha:* Yes.

Q. What are the places you think we should see? Studios and other places?

*R. S. Chuntal:* Kohinoor, Sharda, Krishna, Imperial. Kohinoor and Krishna at Dadar, Sharda is at Tardeo, and the Imperial on the Grant Road side. These are the four principal studios.

Q. Do you think there are any films which we should see?

**Mr. Bharucha:** I think you should see two of the Indian produced pictures, one at the commencement of the industry and the other, one of the latest, namely, "Sacrifice".

**Mr. Chairman:** I have seen it.

**Mr. Neogy:** It is an adapted form of Tagore's work?

**Mr. Bharucha:** Yes. That is our latest effort.

**Chairman:** As regards foreign films, films which are considered objectionable—you do not consider anything objectionable in them and there is no use in asking you about it.

**Mr. Bharucha:** There is another film, a purely Indian type of picture, which is doing the fourth week of its run. It can be seen, up till Friday at the Krishna Cinema. It is called the "At the Clang of Fetters". We can arrange for its beng shown to the members of the Committee. It is a pure Indian production.

**Mr. Neogy:** It is a mythological adaptation?

**Mr. Bharucha:** It is socio-historic. It will be on to-morrow.

**Chairman:** Is it a serial?

**Mr. Bharucha:** It is only a drama in 12 reels. It takes two hours to show.

**Colonel J. D. Crawford:** Which do you consider your best production?

**Mr. Bharucha:** It is very difficult to answer that question coming as we do on behalf of the Trade Association.

**Colonel J. D. Crawford:** It is for you to say. You want us to see the difference between your original effort of years ago and the latest picture?

**Mr. Bharucha:** I am not sure if "Sacrifice" is available. It may be on its way somewhere in the molussil. But this picture is quite good.

**Sir Haroon Jaffer:** Only part of it is shown to-morrow?

**Mr. Bharucha:** The whole thing. A private show can be arranged also.

**Mr. Neogy:** We should like to go to a public show.

**Mr. Bharucha:** We have a show at 4-30 p.m.

**Chairman:** We shall see the 4-30 show on Tuesday next. What has happened to the Westend Cinema?

**Mr. Bharucha:** Nothing is settled yet. It has not been possible for the lessees to get a new lease yet.

**Written Statement of Rao Sahib CHUNILAL G. MUNIM, J.P., as  
Agent for the Universal Pictures Corporation of New York, U.S.A.,  
dated the 16th November 1927.**

1. I am the Agent of the Universal Pictures Corporation since 1917 and am distributing the film productions of the Corporation. I was one of the Directors and for some time was the Managing Director of the Oriental Film Manufacturing Company, a purely Indian concern for three years from 1918. I have also often circulated Indian productions.

2. (a) (1) one-third of the attendance and

(2) two-thirds of the attendance. No increase in the educated classes but an increase of 5 per cent. in the illiterate class in case of Indian productions. —Bombay.

(b) Fort—Educated Indians and Europeans only. Girgaum—Mostly Indians (Educated and Uneducated). Parel-Dadar—Hindus mostly.

c) About 3 per cent. of the attendance.

## PART I.

3. The most popular films with Indian audiences are those which they can easily follow. This class quite naturally consists of Indian productions and pictures of the type of foreign serials, comedies, comedy dramas and thrilling features of the adventure variety.

4. Yes. An effort is made to meet Indian requirements.

5. The demand is considerably in excess of the actual supply.

(a) They cannot compare with foreign productions, but the producers appear to make successful efforts to improve the quality.

(b) Yes; mostly with uneducated classes.

(c) The question is too general, as profit depends upon concurrence of several factors.

Successful Indian films Krishna Janma, Sinha Ghad, Gulbakavli, Aladdin, Magician of Bengal, Sacrifice. At the Clang of Fetters, Sardarba, Leila Majnun.

6. (a) Yes.

(b) (1) To the educated classes:—

Indian Life, Topical Indian News, National Literature, History and Social dramas.

(2) To the illiterate population:—

Topical Indian News, History and Mythology, Folklore Romances.

7. No difficulty is being experienced in exhibiting films to British and Indian troops.

8. (a) *Production*.—The films presently produced show all the weaknesses of the industry in its infant stage, namely, lack of good acting, directing, equipment, setting etc. The photography, however, has been well developed.

*Distribution*.—Distribution is fairly well organized.

(b) See answer to Question No. 15.

9. Yes; but there is a tendency to monopolize exhibition of films, inasmuch as one single organization is at present controlling about 33 per cent. of the Cinematograph Theatres in India.

Block booking system in India is non-existent, but "Blind booking" and "First run or Key Theatres" system is practised.

10. So far as my experience goes I have not observed any special advantage or disadvantage resulting from these systems.

11. No. If pre-viewing in the question means "Trade showing" no need for such shows is felt so far.

12. The Bombay Tax on amusements has always been a drag on Cinema and Theatres owners. It was bitterly opposed by the Trade before inception and has been equally unpopular ever since. It is an undoubted handicap on the exhibitor who has been compelled to reduce his admission fees, which it is not possible, in the present depressed state of trade and unemployment, to increase, and is likely to continue to be a handicap so long as this state continues and the expenses continue to be heavy.

13. From the exhibitor's point of view, a reduction of the present customs tariff would be desirable, as the present margin of profit to importers is so small that any further reduction in hire to counterbalance such increase in duty is not practicable.

From the point of view of the indigenous producer no reduction may be desirable on imported films, but reduction in the present Tariff rates of raw-material would certainly be helpful. It is doubtful whether any increase in the present Customs Tariff on imported films is desirable. The reason is to be found in the present undeveloped condition of the industry in India and the want of sufficient trained staff, the only source of inspiration and education in the line at present open to the Indian Producers is the study of the best foreign films now imported, which are the results of long experience of

some of the best producers in the world. If duty is increased it would restrict importation of best films, thus shutting off the present source of inspiration and education to indigenous producers.

14. Yes, undoubtedly there is a general demand for them.

15. In my opinion, the conditions at present are not favourable to the development of Indian Film-producing industry on a large scale.

My reasons are as follows:—

There is a lack of good producers, directors, actors, and actresses of the class referred to in Question No. 16.

The result is that the films produced are not of such merits as would appeal to the educated classes. Such films therefore appeal only to the uneducated masses. The circulation of such film is, therefore, limited to India, and in most cases, to the Provinces in which they are produced. The latter is due mainly to difference in language, manners, dresses and religion which makes films depicting scenes, lives and characters of one Province difficult to be followed and appreciated in another. In some cases films of one Province are found by Authorities of another Province so obnoxious that their exhibition is banned. So long as this state of affairs continues returns on such films would continue to be very poor, inspite of the fact that there are about 80 Centres in India where Indian films are exhibited. These 80 Centres where films are exhibited are not capable of giving adequate returns on films which may be produced by high-salaried actors and actresses. However, at times an attempt is made, at some more cost, to produce realistic films.

In order to run the industry to some advantage, in my opinion, it is necessary to secure expert producers, directors, etc., and train local talent in the various lines and when that is done to produce films which will appeal, not only to Indians all over India, but also to foreigners and which may have a chance of circulation in foreign countries.

16. No.

But I think there is sufficient talent available in the country which could be turned to the very best account with proper training and, in my opinion, India is capable of producing the very best actors, actresses, directors and producers. I am inclined to believe that we have a good many Scenario-writers in India.

17. Yes. Once the capitalist begins to properly understand this industry.

18. No.

19. It is not possible to institute an absolute comparison between the cost of film production in this country with that of any other country; but relatively to the returns made on Indian films, I am inclined to believe that the cost must be heavy and this factor has been considered in my answer to Question No. 15.

20. (a), (b) No.

21. I do not favour it

#### *Films of the British Common wealth.*

22. (a), (b), (c) In my opinion, participation in the policy referred to in Question No. 22 would be detrimental to the interests of the Indian film industry in its present state of development. My reason is this:—

The chief basis of that policy consists in the quota system, the intention of which is to make a certain amount of films produced in the British Empire to be compulsorily exhibited in Indian Theatres. If compulsion is adopted Indian films will have to compete with films made in other parts of the Empire and having regard to the fact that Indian films at present produced are such as do not appeal much even to the educated classes of Indians themselves it is quite certain that they would not appeal to anybody outside India. This being the case, Indian films will not have any chance of competing with films produced in other parts of the British Empire outside the limits of British India and even in British India they will not be able to stand any competition with films produced in other parts of British Empire.



The result would be that wherever any exhibitor exhibiting foreign films is compelled to choose between an Indian film and a film manufactured in other parts of the British Empire he would invariably choose a Non-Indian film. Taking for instance, a Cinema Theatre which caters for European and educated Indians, such a theatre would not touch any Indian films whatsoever. The latter statement may be exemplified in cases of exhibitors exhibiting exclusively non-Indian films.

## PART II.

### *Social aspects and control.*

24. (a), (b) No.

(c) In my opinion, pictures depicting the following traits would be objectionable anywhere:—

- (1) Loose morals mainly treated.
- (2) Illicit love unpunished.
- (3) Drinking as an idea of refinement.
- (4) Gambling as a successful aid to wealth.
- (5) Use of drugs as a means of pleasure.

This class of pictures is particularly harmful to men and women with a criminal instinct in them and who, by birth, association or habits, are inclined to what is morbid in life. The harm may result from the fact that a sight of such a class of pictures, would serve to feed their morbid sense and would make them satisfied with nothing less.

(d) Censorship is adequate.

(e) No.

25. Yes. They do require special consideration and treatment of censorship.

26. (a) Yes.

27. (a) No.

(b) I do not know of any film exhibited abroad which has such a tendency. I know of various foreign films exhibited in India wherein Indian Life and character were painted in shady colours.

28. No.

29. Yes. In case of extremely suggestive sex films.

30. I am not in favour of such restriction.

31. (a) Yes.

32. Yes, it is satisfactory, but I would suggest that suspension of exhibition of a picture once passed by the Provincial Board of Censors should not be left in the hands of Mofussil authorities.

33. (a), (b), (c) Yes, certainly.

34. (a) I do not advocate a single Central Board as it would inconvenience indigenous producers in particular and other importers in general.

(b) A Central Board in addition to the Provincial Boards would be preferable—subject to the following:—

(c) In advocating a Central Board in addition to the Provincial Boards as above, I suggest that the Provincial Boards (composed of educated Indians only) primarily and finally should be devoted to censorship of Indian produced pictures only; and the certificate granted by such a Provincial Board shall hold good throughout India, but in the case of an Indian produced film that has been banned by any Provincial Board it shall be open to the producer concerned to appeal to the Central Board for a final decision, and in this case such a Central decision shall hold good for the whole of India, or for such parts of India as the Central Censors may prescribe.

I also suggest that all foreign pictures shall firstly and finally be censored by the Central Board only (composed of Europeans, Hindus and

Mohamadans) whose certificate, either way, shall hold for the whole of India or for such parts of India as the Central Censors may prescribe.

Provided however that the Central Board advocated in this scheme, is, located in Bombay and nowhere else, because (1) Bombay is a port of entry where the largest bulk of foreign films is imported and thence distributed, (2) all the principal importers of foreign films have their organizations in Bombay, namely, the Universal Pictures Corporation, Messrs. Madan Theatres, Pathe India and Globe Theatres Ltd. and (3) in an unlightened and Cosmopolitan city like Bombay, men and women capable of serving as members of the Central Board will be readily available, possibly without any remuneration whatsoever.

I also suggest that the Central Board being devoted to Censorship of purely foreign films, there should be an equal element of Indians and Europeans officials and non-officials.

(d) As far as possible from the income derived from the censoring fees, as at present.

35. (a) The constitution of the present Provincial Boards is satisfactory, but I would prefer to have non-official members, elected by public bodies.

(b) In India the one man's censorship is neither desirable nor practicable.

36. (a) The present system referred to in this question under which films are ordinarily examined by Inspectors has worked out satisfactorily. The film censoring officer must be well educated and of good temperament.

(b) I consider that inspection of pictures by members of the board will be preferable and economical.

37. (a) Yes.

(b) No.

40. There is not the slightest necessity of any posters, handbills and advertisements of cinema performances being censored, inasmuch as these are generally brought to public notice only after the films which they are meant to advertise are censored. I have not noticed any such advertisements referring to Cinema shows.

41. Yes, I notice improvement in the moral standard of films.

42. I suggest that if a producer or importer, whose picture is banned by the Board, wishes to appeal to the Board, the Board should get the co-operation of the members of the trade, before finally rejecting the appeal.

### **Oral Evidence of Mr. Y. S. TORO, Deputy Educational Inspector of Visual Instruction, Bombay, on Tuesday, the 8th November 1927.**

*Chairman :* Mr. Toro, you are the Deputy Educational Inspector of Visual Instruction?

A. Yes.

Q. For the Bombay City?

A. For the Bombay Presidency.

Q. You have seen our questionnaire?

A. Yes.

Q. You have not sent up any written statement?

A. No.

Q. What subject would you like to talk about?

A. Especially on the educational aspect of the question, educational use of the cinema for school children, for adult education, for propaganda work, agriculture, health, co-operation and so forth, because we have been doing work in this line with lantern slides only for the present. We have been

doing it for the last 15 years in the Bombay Presidency. We have been delivering lectures for school children on school topics and school subjects. In fact, we have illustrated the whole of the school curriculum by means of lantern slides.

*Q.* What do you mean by school curriculum?

*A.* History, geography, science, sanitation—whatever subjects are taught in schools, except literature and mathematics, we have illustrated by means of lantern slides.

*Q.* You think your department will welcome a departure.

*A.* Not a departure, but as an adjunct. We want to add this to our present method of instruction. We have been thinking about this for the last three years, but for want of finance we have not been able to do anything so far. We should like to have it but for want of funds at present we cannot do anything. We have been, of course, however, experimenting and seeing how far we can use the cinema in schools. Our idea is not to do away with our lantern slides, but to add this in addition. We should have a lantern lecture to begin with and summarise the lecture with the film.

*Q.* You want to have both?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* What is the object?

*A.* Because we use still pictures in the form of lantern slides in order to give a concrete idea of what we talk about; the still pictures are not always able to give a realistic idea of everything. For instance, if we are talking about volcanoes, earthquakes and glaciers and so forth, a concrete idea could not be obtained from lantern slides, and it is very necessary to add to the lantern slides, films showing eruptions of a volcano, the glaciers actually moving and so forth. I am only talking about a portion of physical geography. We are very keen on the cinema as an adjunct to our present method of visual instruction.

*Q.* You think if the general proposal is supported your Government will fall in line with the rest of the country?

*A.* Yes. Especially I am in touch with all the secondary schools in the Bombay Presidency, and almost all the secondary schools are very keen on this, but they cannot do anything as they have not got the funds. The Bombay Government cannot do anything for want of funds. My idea is that the Government of India should meet us half way and especially that films of an educational kind should be supplied by the Government of India to various provinces and we might have our own machines and all secondary schools could take advantage of that. If the Government of India meets us half way like that it could be introduced in a very short time.

*Q.* What are all these things that the Government of India should do? They should supply educational films. What else should they do in that direction?

*A.* I don't think they should do anything else except supply educational films. And not only supply but also produce. In fact we have been exhibiting the history and geography of all divisions in the Bombay Presidency by means of lantern slides. You people in Madras and Calcutta do not know anything for example about the mythology, geography or history of such a place as Sind. Well, we have illustrated the geography, history, industry and so forth of all parts of the Bombay Presidency by means of lantern slides. But these do not go a long way and we want films to illustrate these things. Films would go a long way in educating the people not only of the Bombay Presidency but of other places.

*Q.* Are these lantern slides popular with the students?

*A.* Yes, not only with the students but among the public generally.

*Q.* You invite the parents also?

*A.* Oh yes. They are public lectures. The Bombay Government have got 110 lanterns in the whole Presidency. They are supplied to training schools.

and colleges and a large number are also supplied to inspecting officers. When these officers go on their inspection tour they take their lanterns with them, and in the evening give lectures for the benefit of the public. Both the school teachers and the children attend. They are widely advertised. The officer advertises that on a particular day after school work is over there will be a lantern lecture and all the villagers gather for the lecture.

Q. We have heard it suggested by some people interested in the cinema trade that merely educational films do not attract the Indian public.

A. They mean probably in the theatres, supposing in Bombay City they were going to show only educational films. I agree.

Q. But if they mix up educational films with others, then there won't be so much objection?

A. My idea is not only that, but if the Committee could do so, the showing of a certain percentage of educational films should be made compulsory.

Q. In some licences such a clause is introduced making it compulsory if the Government so desire, that the licensee should exhibit some educational films.

A. But as far as my knowledge goes they are not shown. Long ago, some 5 or 6 years ago, they used to show what are called Universal Screen Magazines; I have seen them myself and they dealt with all sides of industry in different parts of the country. They were very instructive indeed. But now-a-days they are not shown here.

Q. And you think agricultural films can also be shown in schools?

A. Not in schools but for public lectures in villages.

Q. You think your Department can utilise them?

A. We are not only concerned with schools but with adult education. I am expected to deliver public lectures in all the schools. I am the head of my department. We have got 110 lanterns and I go round the whole Presidency. I not only inspect them but also deliver public lectures myself on agriculture and co-operation; and the departments of Agriculture, Co-operation and Public Health demand our services whenever they have an exhibition.

Q. You think your work will be rendered more attractive in the case of mass adult education if you have these cinema films supplied to you?

A. Oh yes. The Great Indian Peninsula Railway have produced some films on agriculture and travel in India. They are very popular. Our complaint is that these people do not give their films out on hire. We wanted those films to be shown wherever I go. After all, my Department is a Government department and the Great Indian Peninsula is also a Government Department. Why then should they not lend their films to us. They will not even hire them out; they want us to buy them outright, which is not possible.

Q. You think there should be co-operation?

A. Yes, those films which they have produced about sugarcane and other industries are very popular among the people.

Q. Have you applied to them?

A. They would not hire them but they asked us to buy them, which we cannot do.

Q. Are your provincial finances improving?

A. On the other hand the grant for Visual instruction this year has been reduced. I do not think our finances are improving and that comes in the way even of our developing the present system of instruction.

Q. Have you got men trained for this purpose of explaining films to the people?

A. I am myself trained and I have one assistant who is trained. Supposing we had the aim of introducing these films among the schools, in my

inspection tours I might be able to train some people. We have trained men to work the lanterns.

Q. I have just seen a magazine published in London which contains an article by an Indian gentleman about these educational films being well produced in Germany.

A. And also in France. I have seen such educational films produced in France especially with regard to scientific matters such as the prevention of disease, etc.

Q. What prevents your Government from getting them out?

A. Some of those films are there in the Parel Laboratory but we cannot get them. It is called the Haffkine Institute. Now these films have been brought from France. They have English titles. Originally they had French titles. I was told that many people had applied for them. I myself have not yet applied, because I know they have been refused to many people. In fact there is no co-operation even in the Government Departments.

Q. Surely you don't want the Government of India to help you in that direction.

A. We do want the Government to supply films.

Q. But I mean in the matter of co-operation in your own province?

A. There are now half a dozen films in the Parel Laboratory and a few in the Great Indian Peninsula. Those will not go a long way.

Q. There must be an increased number of such films and you think the Government of India alone can do that?

A. Yes. In America in almost all schools the whole curriculum is illustrated by means of these films. I have a list of 1,001 films which illustrate the whole curriculum used in many schools, to illustrate even literature.

Q. I should like to trouble you on one other point if you have done with that. Have you anything more to add to what you have said?

A. I should say that in every theatre there should be one or two educational films shown as I said just now. Another point is there should be Indian titles. The films shown are not intelligible to many people. They should have Hindi or Hindustani titles whenever they are shown in theatres so that they may be made intelligible to the average audience in all kinds of films.

Q. But I believe in those Indian films shown here they are.

A. In Indian films they are but I mean in foreign films there are no Indian titles and there they should be.

Q. That is more a suggestion for the trade.

A. I would put it to the Committee that they should do anything they can.

Q. It is a suggestion we can put to the trade. Anything more you want to add?

A. What we have done with lantern slides can be done with films; we can illustrate the geography, history, etc., of different parts of the Presidency.

Q. Why confine yourself to the Presidency and not the whole of India or the geography of the world?

A. Of course films regarding other countries are available in America.

Q. Not only in America. I daresay you have seen the questionnaire. Do you approve of the idea contained in questions Nos. 22 and 23?

A. Oh yes, that will be very useful.

Q. I suppose you would insist on a reciprocal arrangement between the various countries?

A. Yes.

Q. Now are you a frequenter of cinemas?

A. I cannot say that, but I go at times.

**Q.** Do you think that these cinemas have any demoralising effect on the public or any portion of the public?

**A.** I do not think there is much demoralisation directly.

**Q.** Why do you qualify your opinion by saying "directly"?

**A.** What I mean is these films show the manners and customs of the people where they are produced, manners and customs which are different to ours; but we should not say they are demoralising. They are merely different. If our customs and manners were shown in other countries, they won't like them probably. So we also don't like their manners and customs; but I don't think there is much demoralisation.

**Q.** You are a man of experience. We should like to have your opinion on this subject, because it has been pressed on the Government and the Committee that these films generally describing Western life are unsuitable for exhibition in the East.

**A.** I think they show Western life which is quite different from our life. I don't think they do anything more than that.

**Q.** Have they such an effect that it is necessary to take any measures to stop or control them?

**A.** I do not think so.

**Q.** There is an absolute statement before us by one or two responsible citizens of Bombay, Indian citizens, complaining that these films have a demoralising effect. I should like your opinion on the matter.

**A.** I do not think there is much demoralising except that they show the manners and customs of other lands which are quite different to ours.

**Mr. Green:** To revert to the first subject about which you talked—educational films, the real difficulty, I take it, is one of finance?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You are not actually complaining, I take it, that the Great Indian Peninsula and the Haffkine Laboratory won't hire you their films?

**A.** If they would lend them to us we could use them.

**Q.** A film can only be used a certain number of times and wears out like many other things, even quicker. If the Great Indian Peninsula lend their films to you they won't have enough for themselves.

**A.** What is the object of the films? I take it they have been produced to be shown to people.

**Q.** We are to have their representative here this afternoon. I understand their chief object is the interest of the Railway so that by showing improved methods of agriculture they may be able to carry bigger crops.

**A.** I take it their object is to educate the people.

**Q.** Yes, but the railway budget is not for the education of the people but for the welfare of the railways.

**A.** The films don't only deal with railway matters. They deal with agriculture, travel, etc., which are very useful for school purposes.

**Q.** My point is they are naturally concerned chiefly with the railways; but they offer to make them for you and sell them to you.

**A.** Yes, but at an exorbitant rate, 8 annas a foot; while foreign films are 4 annas a foot.

**Q.** There are technical reasons into which we need hardly enter here.

**A.** My point is that the films, whether used by the Great Indian Peninsula or the Education Department, serve the same object.

**Q.** That is a different question. Railways is an Imperial subject, while Education is a transferred provincial subject. Each department has to have a separate budget. Is it the duty of the Government of India or of the Railway Board to supply money for education?

**A.** It is the duty of the Government of India to educate the people by the films.

**Q.** But by law that duty has developed on the Local Governments.

**A.** Then why do the Great Indian Peninsula go to Sholapur, etc., and show their films?

**Q.** Because their railway runs through those places.

**A.** But why should not we be allowed to display them also?

**Q.** Because they are their films.

**A.** But when they are not being used by them they should lend them out.

**Q.** I will ask their representative about that or the Chairman will, no doubt. Who at present finances the production of lantern slides?

**A.** The Government of Bombay. We have a separate budget which forms part of the Education Budget.

**Q.** Now you cannot go in for educational films unless you get further funds?

**A.** No.

**Q.** Is there any reason why the Government of Bombay should not impose further taxation for that purpose?

**A.** It is for the Government of Bombay to consider that. I am not in a position to say anything about taxation.

**Q.** You talk about a suggestion that a certain quota of educational films should be forced on cinema theatres?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Is your idea that they should pay for these educational films?

**A.** Yes, as they do for other films.

**Q.** But when you buy a thing you pay for what you want?

**A.** This is wanted by the public.

**Q.** But is not the best judge of that the cinema owner himself?

**A.** A large number of children go to see these films and in my opinion children are not at all benefitted.

**Q.** I am coming to that point. The distinction I want to make is this. There is this profession of showing films which like most professions is done for the money and the profit that can be made, and it is surely for the cinema owner to decide what is to pay him first. That is one point of view—the commercial point of view. You graft on that an entirely different thing—the educational point of view.

**A.** One of the objects of the Committee is to encourage Indian films, as far as I can gather. I want suitable films for Indians, and the films should be understood by children. Why should they not be, if children pay for them.

**Q.** I do not think the children do pay; their parents pay.

**A.** The children themselves pay; I do not make that distinction at all. A child goes and buys a ticket for 12 annas and goes in.

**Q.** You are not answering my question. You are putting a question of your own. I am asking as a matter of practical politics, do you think it possible to graft on to the commercial showing of films the forced exhibition of educational films which you desire.

**A.** There should be a certain percentage of educational films.

**Q.** Do you realise that if that is not popular they would put it on at the beginning or at the end of the show?

**A.** I do not know but I stick to my opinion that there should be something shown in the theatres of a useful educational kind.

**Q.** Has there not been a suggestion in this presidency that such educational films should not be forced on cinema proprietors—that they should be paid for exhibiting and instead of paying for the film the Government should pay them for exhibiting it?

**A.** I have not heard of it.

*Q.* Only one other question I want to ask you—the question of demoralisation which we are told is caused by the exhibition of Western films. You say you don't think there is much, you don't consider there is much demoralisation?

*A.* No, not much.

*Q.* Does the ordinary Indian who watches these films discriminate in his mind "I know that is not my kind or method of life." He simply says "That is different" and does not try and make a moral judgment on that.

*A.* The so-called educated people do that, and as regards illiterate people, if they go to the cinema frequently they cultivate a kind of sense of the cinema. If an uneducated man goes once or twice he thinks it might be true; but if he goes frequently he cultivates a sense that it is something different from our people. If he goes to the theatre once or twice only then he may not be able to understand this.

*Q.* Does he make any sort of moral judgment?

*A.* Oh yes, he does.

*Colonel Crawford:* Mr. Green has asked most of my questions. Is there any arrangement for taking children when a suitable educational film is produced?

*A.* No, there is no arrangement.

*Q.* So far as you are concerned you have never thought of it?

*A.* When I recommended that the Government of India should prepare educational films and supply them to the theatres my idea is that these films should be given to the theatres and that children should be allowed to go and see them.

*Q.* You are asking the Government of India to do a job that belongs to the Province.

*A.* The only thing I am asking the Government of India to do is to supply educational films, if the Provinces are not able to spend on them from their own budgets.

*Q.* Do you think it would be of value to education to show Empire films of different parts of the Empire?

*A.* Yes, that would be very useful.

*Q.* Have you got any lantern slides of that sort of subject, of Canada, Australia, etc.?

*A.* Oh yes, we have got 6 lectures and 60 slides to each lecture on the British Empire.

*Q.* Therefore you could use Empire films if they were available and you had money to pay for them. As regards the mofussil, have you come across any travelling cinemas?

*A.* Formerly there were some—4 or 5 years ago—which used to show 4th hand or 5th hand films which were taken away from the theatres; but nowadays I don't know of any.

*Q.* Your lectures are free?

*A.* They are all free.

*Q.* Do you think people in the villages would be able to afford or be willing to pay?

*A.* They may, but I don't think we should make it compulsory for them to pay.

*Q.* Somebody has got to pay—either by taxation or out of their pockets: the money is not in the air.

*A.* I had a proposal sometime ago that the school children should be allowed to pay anything they like in order to buy new slides, our budget being reduced and there not being money for sufficient slides. So my proposal was that boys might be asked to pay whatever they like.

*Q.* You think they would pay.



A. Yes, some of them would pay.

Mr. Neogy : You just stated that the Department did not approve of those ideas of yours. May I know whether you have put up any comprehensive scheme before the Government of Bombay?

A. No, not even to the Director of Public Instruction nor any scheme to my own department; but in personal conversation I gathered it would not work, so I had to give it up.

Q. In an earlier part of your evidence you referred to some experiments about educational films you had made in connection with magic lantern shows. What kind of experiments?

A. There were a large number of infant welfare slides which were available to us whenever we called for them. They were very popular. There was a man in Sind, Bulchand Karamchand, who was doing some educational work with cinemas and he had a large number of films which we borrowed from him; so during the last 3 years I have been taking slides and showing them to school children, when I go on propaganda work.

Q. You are referring to the activities of Mr. Bulchand Karamchand?

A. Yes.

Q. Is it not the fact that he gave up the attempt after a time?

A. Because his idea was that it should be self-supporting. That is what I say. We cannot make the people pay. It should be left to the people to pay if they like and appreciate the films. Of course many people will not pay; and the cinema business cannot be made self-supporting. That is why after an experience of 10 years he gave it up.

Q. You have no doubt read a lot about what other countries are doing with regard to educational cinemas. Do you happen to know anything about America where they have a Federal system—a Central Government as also the State Governments? Do you know of any instance in which any Central Government has undertaken any such work on behalf of the different Provinces, although education may not be the direct concern of that Central Government?

A. In America almost all the different Provinces have done that. They have got films and they exchange films between them.

Q. But the Central Government which is on the top of the State Governments—has it done anything about these matters?

A. I am sorry I don't know exactly whether they have done so but I have been reading the magazine "Visual Education" published in America and they give all kinds of information regarding films in different parts of America but I don't know whether anything is done by the Federal Government itself.

Q. I suppose your case is that for the present at any rate the Central Government should co-ordinate the efforts of the different provinces?

A. Yes.

Q. And they could be very useful in getting films of universal interest made or imported and then circulating them for the benefit of the provincial educational authorities. That I believe is your scheme?

A. That is my idea.

Q. I do not know whether your attention has been drawn to an article which has appeared in the Journal of Educational Psychology under the heading of "Modern Education and utility in education," where they particularly refer to what the French Board of Education do in this matter. I do not know whether you have seen it.

A. I have not seen it, but I know that in France, Germany and America they are doing it. There is a movement in England also now.

Q. I find from this newspaper cutting that the French Board of Education supplies lantern slides and films to schools, and I believe your scheme more or less accords with that?

A. We have been giving these slides to all the schools, but we have not got enough films.

Q. You stated just now that the Government of Bombay have a separate provision for visual instruction. Does this visual instruction include the exhibition of lantern pictures? How much are you spending now?

A. We are spending Rs. 15,000 for the whole presidency.

Q. How much more would you require for the films you want?

A. If we were to confine ourselves only to lantern slides, I think Rs. 4,000 or Rs. 5,000 more would be quite sufficient, but if we were to introduce Cinemas, I have no idea how much more money would be required, but I think that if Government were to give us say Rs. 5,000 every year, we could make a good beginning and gradually develop the thing. My idea is that we should buy about a dozen films and a machine every year. A machine costs about one thousand rupees, and the educational reels that we get out from America cost about Rs. 500 each.

Q. If that is all that is required, don't you think that you might well approach the Provincial Government for that amount before you ask this Committee to make a recommendation to the Central Government?

A. Even this small sum of Rs. 5,000 cannot be provided by the Bombay Government, and as I just said, our budget is being reduced, and we cannot get more slides for want of funds.

Q. Somebody has told us—I believe it is in one of these written answers—that the exhibition of films is likely to prove injurious to the eyesight of young boys. Do you agree with that?

A. If the children are frequently taken to the cinemas and if the films are not quite good, that is to say if the films flicker, or if the fan does not work properly, there will certainly be a great strain on the eyes. But we show our films only once or twice a month, and I don't think it will spoil the eyes of children.

Q. I believe you would consult competent medical opinion before you put your idea into practice?

A. Yes.

Q. You said that the Empire films illustrating Empire subjects would be very useful. In the present efforts of yours in regard to lantern slide lectures, do you confine yourself to Empire subjects or deal with worldwide subjects?

A. For the present we have got lantern slides dealing with all portions of the world, but among them we have got about 600 slides dealing with the British Empire.

Q. Then you emphasise the Empire aspect?

A. We emphasise in the first instance the Indian aspect, then the British Empire aspect and lastly come the other parts of the world.

Q. From the purely educational point of view, do you think there is any need to discriminate between the Empire aspects and the world aspects apart from the Indian aspects?

A. I think we who live in India ought to know first more about our own country and as we come under the British Empire we ought to know more about them also, and then we should know about the other parts of the world.

Q. Do you find that the educational films dealing with subjects in other parts of the world are readily available?

A. Yes, films dealing with social manners and customs of people of other parts of the world are readily available.

Q. Now, the Screen shows the manners and customs of the people of the West, and a point has been made that a particular class of such films has a demoralising effect on Indians. As far as I understood your position, it was that even these differences of manners and customs as illustrated on the screen have their educational value.

A. I take it that all kinds of social manners and customs should be shown, and not merely the good ones; I mean all sides should be shown. Of course, there is a little exaggeration, because the first object of the cinemas is to afford a little amusement, and unless there is some exaggeration there will be no amusement. They don't generally show the realities, and the cinemas have to exaggerate things in order to afford greater entertainment to the public. Even if we have Indian subjects, a little exaggeration is bound to come in.

*Chairman:* You recognise that there should be a limit to showing even realities?

A. Of course, nobody should go beyond decency. There are rules made by the Cinema Censors, and if certain films go beyond any reasonable decency they should be censored. In fact such films are censored.

Q. Do you think there will be advantage if people like you are sent to countries outside India like Germany and France where educational films are manufactured and shown?

A. It will certainly be an advantage, because we could then see how films are being used and how they are made educationally useful. We shall also gain much knowledge by trying to learn their methods of exhibition of educational films. On the whole, there will certainly be a great advantage if educational officers were deputed to go abroad to study the use of these educational films. Here I may inform the Committee that in other provinces there is not such a thorough organization as we have in Bombay relating to visual instruction. We have been carrying on this work for the last fifteen years. It was first started by the late Mr. Sharp, who was the Director of Public Instruction, in 1908, and we have spent many lakhs of rupees on the improvement of visual instruction, and there is no organization in other provinces corresponding to ours.

*Colonel Crawford:* You advocate, therefore, that as regards the masses visual instruction should take precedence in India over all other forms of instruction. You have got a good deal of primary education going on now?

A. We have got different kinds of subjects, we have got school subjects meant for primary schools, for high schools and so on.

Q. But you are not a strong supporter of visual instruction in preference to book reading?

A. Oh, no. Visual instruction is only an aid to ordinary instruction. We cannot divert the funds intended for primary education and carry on visual instruction alone. In fact, we have not got enough money even for the expansion of primary education.

*Chairman:* Thank you, Mr. Toro.

## **Written Statement of Mr. J. STENSON, Supervisor, Bombay Entertainments Duty Act.**

### *Replies to questionnaire.*

#### **INTRODUCTORY.**

1. No.

#### **GENERAL.**

2. (a) To a great extent. Both educated and illiterate classes attend cinemas. The attendance is on the increase. This refers to mostly all cinemas in Bombay City.

(b) Composes all classes, illiterate and literate, except in the cinemas in the north of the city where the audience consists of the labouring classes only.

(c) A very small proportion of children under 14 years of age attend. But a great proportion of the audience consists of adolescents between the ages of 14 and 25.

## PART I.

*Film Industry in India.*

3. The most popular films are Indian Historical, Mythological, and Romance, amongst the educated and uneducated classes of Indians. Also American Comic pictures (especially faked pictures) are very popular amongst the uneducated and adolescent portion of the audience.

4. No. Not sufficient studios to produce pictures. Five studios existing in the city.

5. Not in sufficient numbers.

(a) Not all.

(b) Yes, most of them.

5. (c) Indian films of the good class are more profitable than Western films. The following were very profitable pictures:—

*Imperial Cinema.*

Fairy Tale—"Gul Bakavali"	By
Indian Romance—"The Fairy of Ceylon"	Kohinoor Film Co., Dadar.
Social—"Kala Nag"	

*Majestic Cinema.*

	By
Social—"Debt of Sin"	Majestic Film Co., Chowpatty.
Historical—"Chandrarao More"	United Pictures Corporation, Poona.
Historical—"Hotbal Padmini"	Krishna Film Co., Dadar.

*Krishna Cinema.*

	By
Mythological—"Light of Asia"	Great Eastern Corporation Co., Delhi.
Romance—"Golden Lotus"	Sharda Film Co., Tardeo.
Social—"A Crown for two Days"	Krishna Film Co., Dadar.

*Novelty Cinema.*

	By
Historical—"Sinha Gad" and many others	Maharashtra Film Co., Kolhapur.

6. (a) Yes, Certainly.

(b) Historical, mythological and Indian Romance films appeal both to the educated and the illiterate population.

12. The Amusement Tax is no handicap to the Exhibitor. It is the public who pay the tax and the fact that attendance to cinemas is on the increase proves that the tax is not prohibitive to the public.

14-15. Yes.

16. No.

18. No.

21. No.

*Films of the British Commonwealth.*

22. (a), (b), (c) Yes.

No Suggestions.

23. (a) By means of a World Gazette.

## PART II.

*Social Aspects and Control.*

24. (a) Yes.

(b) No.

(d) (i), (ii) No.

(e) No.

25. Yes.

26. (a) Yes.

(b) No.

27. (a) Yes.

(b) No.

28. (a), (b) Yes.

(I) American faked films.

(II) Gives the adolescent wrong ideas of life and wrong impression of European Society.

29. Yes.

30. Yes. Cinema picture are injurious to children's eyes. I should suggest that all children under 10 years should be prohibited.

31. (a) Yes.

32. Yes.

33. (a), (b), (c) No.

34. (a) No.

35. (a), (b) Yes.

37. (a) Yes. Section 7, clauses 1 to 8 of the Cinematograph Amendment Act of 1919 provides adequate safeguards.

(b) The Act is sufficient.

38-39. No.

40. Yes.

(a) No.

41-42. No.

45. (a) Yes. All producers should hold a production license with rules and regulations.

(b) Yes.

**Oral Evidence of Mr. J. STENSON, Supervisor, Bombay Entertainments Duty Act, on Tuesday, the 8th November 1927.**

*Chairman:* You are the Supervisor of the Bombay Entertainments Duty Act?

A. Yes.

Q. For how long have you held that office?

A. Since 1923.

Q. In that capacity do you frequent cinemas?

A. Yes, everyday.

Q. In the city or also in the province?

A. Only in the city of Bombay. My experience is confined to the city of Bombay.

Q. You have seen both classes of cinemas, where western pictures are shown and also where Indian films are shown?

A. Yes.

Q. What classes of films do the Indian population prefer?

A. They prefer Indian pictures.

Q. Although they are not quite up to the mark?

A. Yes, they prefer the Indian pictures.

Q. The Indian made films do not compare favourably with the English films?

A. Most of them do not.

Q. What do you think will be necessary to improve the Indian film industry?

A. It will take time.

Q. What do you think can be done either by the producers themselves or by the Government to improve the Indian film industry?

A. I am afraid I cannot answer it.

Q. I see from your answer to Question No. 4 you lay stress on the point that there are not sufficient studios to produce pictures?

A. Yes.

Q. You mean sufficient in numbers or sufficient in equipment?

A. There should be more studios, but those that are already in the city of Bombay are all well equipped.

Q. Do you think any thing can be done to further improve them?

A. I have seen them, but I do not know what sort of studios they have in Europe, but from what I see, I think the Bombay studios are quite all right.

Q. As regards the entertainment duty, I see you maintain that this tax is no handicap to the exhibitor. Can you tell us what is the amount actually levied?

A. It is two annas in the Rupee. If a man takes a ticket of Rs. 2, we levy four annas on it.

Q. Is there any exemption for the poorer classes?

A. For educational, charitable purposes and for educational and scientific purposes combined, exemptions are granted by the Commissioner of Police.

Q. Is there any general exemption for the lower classes of tickets?

A. No, none.

Q. I thought there was no tax on the four anna tickets.

A. There is no tax on tickets of four annas and below it.

Q. Are four anna seats very common in the theatres in Bombay?

A. Yes. The poorer labouring classes go to the four anna seats in large numbers.

Q. Has the Empire Theatre got 4 anna tickets?

A. Yes. These four anna tickets are the most popular with the poorer classes, I mean in the theatres outside the Fort.

Q. Now, there is a general complaint from the trade that this entertainment tax operates as a great hardship?

A. It is not so at all.

Q. Can you tell us what is the amount levied in the city of Bombay every year for cinemas only?

A. You mean in any particular year, Sir?

Q. You can give us figures for the last three years? I suppose you have got official years?

A. The total amount of tax levied since 1923 altogether was, for the Cinema only, Rs. 7,50,750 in Bombay city alone up to the official year 31st March 1927.

*Q.* Does it go to the general revenues of the province?

*A.* It does go to the revenues, but I don't know what is done with it afterwards.

*Q.* They complain that there are no funds for educational films. Could not the Government use a part of these collections for educational films?

*A.* These funds are intended for primary education, and I think something is being done in this matter.

*Q.* You say something about the eyes of the children being affected. You don't suggest that children should not go to the cinemas?

*A.* I don't think that very small children should be allowed to go to the cinemas, because it may affect their eyes and it must in one way or other produce a bad effect on small children.

*Q.* The trend of the evidence shows that a very small percentage of the audience is composed of children?

*A.* It is so. I have seen children in arms being taken by their parents and servants to the shows; even children of 2 or 3 years are taken to the cinemas.

*Mr. Green:* Do they charge for children in arms?

*A.* They go free.

*Chairman:* It is a somewhat drastic proposal to make that children under ten should be prohibited from going to cinema shows. Do you maintain that it is necessary that something should be done to prohibit children under 10 from going to Cinemas?

*A.* I think they should be prohibited, because I have noticed many times that boys of 8 or 9 years old loaf about the cinema halls at odd hours of the night. I have personally observed many times that young boys instead of being in bed are always loafing round the theatres looking at the posters and so on, at a time when they should be in bed.

*Q.* Talking about these posters, do you find that these are objectionable in any way. I mean have you found any objectionable posters?

*A.* No, I have not yet seen any objectionable posters.

*Q.* I answer to No. 28, (10), you say "Gives the adolescent wrong ideas of life and wrong impression of European society". What is your solution of the problem?

*A.* I have seen western pictures shown here in which English ladies are made to dance on dinner tables, some of them are shown as scantily dressed and so forth. I don't suppose such things will ever happen at all in any civilized society in Europe and such pictures are shown to the Indians of no education.

*Q.* You will admit that such pictures should not be shown to anybody?

*A.* But a European would not take any notice of it. I am talking of young boys, and I say they should not be shown such pictures.

*Q.* But decency is common to both, whether European or Indian?

*A.* I should say that if a man had been to Europe or if he has come out from Europe, he would not believe that these pictures are real.

*Q.* Do you mean to say that Indians would take such pictures as being a true representation of European customs or manners?

*A.* Some of them may take them as true.

*Q.* Do you think that the Indian is so extraordinarily simple that he will take it that such things are quite so common among the Europeans?

*A.* I am talking of the uneducated classes and young boys of 12 and 15. Grown up people would not believe such things.

*Q.* I think you rather exaggerate the importance of the uneducated classes. They are shrewd people, are they not?

A. Yes, but there are boys who have never seen England and they may take it that these things are true and that they do really happen. I don't say that these boys have not got as much intelligence as English boys of the same age, but they have not seen Europe.

Q. Is this impression of yours gained from any conversation with Indians or it is a mere guess?

A. I have questioned many young boys who frequently visit the cinema shows, and things like a train running at 150 miles speed, or a man jumping from a huge tree are believed to be true by them.

Q. I should like to have your independent view, because you are the first European gentleman who has come to give evidence before us. We have heard complaints from European gentlemen and ladies that the exhibition of western life to an easterner produces a lowering effect concerning the European. That is the general complaint, and we want to pursue it.

A. That is not my complaint. I don't think it is such a serious thing as to take notice of.

Q. You say that "Gives the adolescent wrong ideas of life and wrong impression of European society". You mean therefore that more care should be taken in censoring individual films which exhibit such extraordinary life?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think that the present censoring is not strict enough in that respect?

A. The censoring is all right.

Q. We have all different ideas of decency; for instance, we have different notions of decency and the Europeans have different notions of decency, and as long as the Europeans live here we do not expect them to give up their notions of decency and their manners unless there is something extraordinarily indecent in the pictures shown. We often hear these complaints, but when pressed to a point they are not able to tell us where the trouble actually lies, and I seek your assistance in this matter.

A. It is very hard to answer this question.

Q. It is much harder for us to solve the question. But I may tell you at once that there are certain things in your mode of life which Indians do not want to adopt and will not care to adopt. But that is no reason why we should think that your moral notions are of a lower sort. There are also certain things in our mode of life which you do not want to adopt. But all that does not mean that each one should think that the moral notions of the other are of a lower sort.

A. I do not find anything wrong with the Indian. I have been very long in this country, and I have not found anything objectionable among Indians. I don't think I can say anything more as regards part II to question No. 28.

Mr. K. C. Neogy: I believe you consider that the present censorship is quite satisfactory?

A. Yes.

Q. Please refer to your answer to question No. 21, and your answer to both parts is No.

A. That is a mistake. It should be Yes.

Q. You said that the entertainment tax is actually paid by the public, that is to say, its incidence is not borne by the exhibitor at all?

A. Yes.

Q. Is it a fact that immediately after the new Entertainment Tax came into operation the exhibitors reduced their rates of admission so as to make the quota of the tax self-contained in the revised prices of admission?



A. I don't think so, the price of tickets has always been the same. If the picture is a good one, sometimes they will increase the price of admission, but if it is a bad one then they may possibly reduce the price of admission.

Q. But you are positive that, so far as the entertainment tax itself is concerned, it never led to any reduction in the price of admission tickets?

A. There has been an increase in attendance. Therefore the tax cannot be felt. There is an increase in the receipts under the tax.

Q. A complaint was made to us that occasionally the shows are interrupted by the police and other people.

A. That is in the mofussil. The Police have nothing to do with it at all here. We have never had a complaint.

Col. Crawford: In 2 (b) of your answer, Mr. Stenson, you say the audience consists of the labouring class only. Is that a personal expression of opinion or could you by figures give me definite evidence on that point?

A. I have no figures but I have my personal observations.

Q. But you have got figures of the tax collected at every cinema, which would show the percentage of people in each class of seats. You could give us that.

A. I could. I might tell you beforehand that it is mainly the labouring class and the illiterate class who generally go to the cinemas in the north. There is nobody else there. The bulk of the people go to the four-anna seats, but there are also 8-anna sets, which is the maximum.

Q. The same answer then applies to your (c) where you say that the greater proportion of the audience consists of adolescents. That is simply personal observation?

A. All my evidence is personal observation, nothing else.

Q. Could you let the committee have a statement of figures showing the attendance at the various cinemas?

A. Do you want it for each cinema for a year or for any time?

Q. Would it be a very long job?

A. It would be. We get the returns every week.

Q. I might suggest it under 5. You say Indian films of a good class are more profitable than foreign films. Can you substantiate that by evidence?

A. I have got the evidence here.

Q. I want definite evidence, not only a statement of opinion but definite evidence from figures that that is a fact.

A. Here is an instance. The gross takings in the Royal Opera House for western pictures was Rs. 12,684 for seven days, (that is the first week of the picture) and the tax on that was Rs. 1,822. At the Imperial Indian Pictures, it was Rs. 11,129 in one week. At the Majestic Rs. 9,451, at the Krishna Rs. 9,033.

Q. Now what are the figures for western cinemas.

A. The Royal Opera House is a western picture.

Q. Well, you have got different shows. Could you give us figures for a week at the Krishna cinema when western films were shown?

A. They never show western films.

Q. Well now, give me figures for a cinema which shows sometimes an Indian film, sometimes a western. You see what I am trying to get at? You say that Indian films are more popular. Well, I would very much like to get not only an expression of opinion on that but figures showing the takings of a particular cinema for a western film and an Indian film after you have got it. The same cinema.

A. I think I have got what you want here.

Q. You see you are the person who might be able to give us statistical evidence on that point.

A. There was a social picture shown at the Majestic cinema "Debt of Sin" which brought in a lot of money. That is an Indian film. Then there was a historical film "Chandrarao" by the Hindu Pictures Corporation which brought in a lot of money. These are instances I am giving.

Q. You have given us a lot of these in the memorandum, but we have only got your statement that they are profitable.

A. That is taken from the records.

Q. Could you give us those figures? And you could look into that question for me—comparative profits received from displaying western and Indian pictures. Do you think you have figures that would establish the fact for us one way or another? You say Indian pictures are more popular and more profitable. Well, I would like you to establish that fact, if it is possible, by figures from your statistics. Do you think you could do that?

A. I could. If you will give me a letter saying what you want.

Q. I think if we can show that the profits from one type of film are greater than from another, we would have some definite evidence.

A. I can give you a copy of the actual return submitted by the cinema people themselves.

Chairman: Is there any cinema which shows both western and Indian films?

A. Yes, there are.

Q. Probably the figures of these cinemas would be helpful.

Colonel Crawford: Well, now, I turn to the question which the Chairman pressed you on with regard to the exhibition of western films out here. Do you consider that the scenes depicted in so many western films of cabaret life, the life of the underworld, are typical of the life of the west?

A. No, I don't believe it myself.

Q. Or would you say that there was a predominance of that type of thing shown in the cinema?

A. Yes.

Q. Therefore, the result is that western films as shown to-day, including all these cabaret scenes and scenes of the underworld, are a definite misrepresentation of western life.

A. I think so.

Q. As regards the question of the entertainment tax which my friend, Mr. Neogy put forward, could you get us the price of tickets in 1923 before the tax came into operation and after it came in?

A. I think it could be got from the proprietors. I have no information before the tax. I have only got the information from the time the tax was started. I do not know what they used to charge before. I used to go to the cinema myself before I took over the post of supervisor.

Q. If you have no information we can ask the exhibitors. You have no information? When they were compiling the results of such a tax Government must have had information as to what the prices of admission were? Do you think you could get it for us?

A. I will try.

Mr. Green: On the question of misrepresentation of western life, we have been told that in many places, especially in the north of the island, only Indian films are exhibited. Therefore there is no risk of misunderstanding of western life. I am referring to Bombay. Western films are exhibited

mainly in the Fort theatres. A certain number of Indians attend those theatres?

A. Oh yes.

Q. There again, the educated Indians who attend those theatres are not likely to be seriously deceived.

A. No, it does not affect them at all.

Q. Well, what about the people in the cheaper seats?

A. You mean in the cinemas in the Fort? But very few go there. There are very few four-anna seats.

Q. But you told us they were filled.

A. Not in the Excelsior. In the north of the town they are always filled.

Q. Well, so far as Bombay only is concerned, even if some of the films do misrepresent western life, it does not seem as if any very serious harm is going to happen.

A. Oh no.

Q. Because the people who would misunderstand them do not see them.

A. The people who go there are more educated people than the people in the north.

*Chairman:* I want to trouble you with one more question. It is more from ignorance that I ask it. What is typical of cabaret life or the life of the underworld. What sort of scenes?

A. Well, people drinking and dancing and jumping on tables and engaging in low class vulgarities. Then ladies dancing on the table and kicking their legs over the gentlemen's heads. These things of course would have some effect upon the ignorant.

Q. I mean you don't refer to the ordinary dancing or kissing scenes?

A. Well, that is all a matter of taste, Sir.

Q. You wouldn't refer to them as cabaret life or underworld life?

A. No.

*Colonel Crawford:* Well, I can make you understand in my letter exactly what we want. We don't only want an opinion but you should be able to say, now this is proved by figures. We would like proof of your statement that Indian films are more popular than western films, or more profitable than western films. That is your considered opinion on the subject. I think from your figures you could probably prove that to us and that would be very useful.

A. Well, we cannot get the actual takings for these Indian pictures in the north and the centre of Bombay because we do not get any returns as to the amount of money received for the lower class seats--that is up to four annas, so we don't know anything at all.

Q. Well you might make a statement to that effect.

A. And in any case in the theatres in the north of Bombay the 4-anna seats are the most popular and they make the most money, that we know nothing at all about. I only know the price of the 8-anna seats.

Q. You see what I am after.

A. I see what you are after. You want proof as to whether western pictures or Indian pictures are the more profitable concern.

Q. If you could do it from figures at your disposal, it would be very useful to the committee.

A. I can give you a copy of a few returns from individual cinemas which show western and eastern films.

Q. And then find out if you can what was the price of tickets in 1923 before the tax came in. They must have had those figures before them.

**Supplementary Written Statement of Mr. J. STENSON, Supervisor,  
Bombay Entertainments Duty Act, Bombay, dated the 14th  
November 1927.**

With reference to your letter No. 205 of the 10th instant requesting me to furnish figures to substantiate my opinion that Indian films are more profitable than Western Films, I enclose herewith a statement to that effect.

2. I have taken for comparison six of the leading cinemas in Bombay, three showing western films and three showing Indian films only, for six months, *viz.*, from 1st January to 30th June 1927. It will be seen at a glance at the statement that the receipts for the six months to the exhibitors of the Western films were Rs. 2,42,061-2-0, whereas the receipts to the exhibitors of the Indian films were Rs. 2,83,580-14-0, which is a difference in favour of the Indian film exhibitors of Rs. 41,519-12-0 in the six months in question.

3. The figures in the statement have been taken from the actual certified weekly returns submitted to this office by the exhibitors themselves, so that there can be no mistake whatever.

4. From the above it is plain that the Indian film is the more profitable and popular. Moreover, the figures in the statement do not include the amounts received for admission in the lower class of seat of four annas and under, as we have no record of this class, as it is non-taxable. But, from personal observation, I can say that the cinemas showing Indian films take a great deal more money for the non-taxable seats than those showing Western films.

5. With reference to para. 2 of your letter I enclose a statement showing the price of admission to cinemas prior and subsequent to the imposition of the Entertainment Duty Tax. The prices subsequent to the tax are taken from the actual returns submitted to this office, and the prices prior to the tax are taken from statements submitted to the Commissioner of Police in 1921 when the Bombay Entertainment Duty Act was under preparation by Government.

6. Although the prices are supposed to be fixed, in some instances, *viz.*, when a profitable picture is being exhibited, some of the exhibitors enhance their prices. But, on the whole, the prices prior and subsequent to the tax are more or less the same with the addition of entertainment tax, which in all cases is paid by the public.

Cinema showing Western Films only, from 1st January to 30th June 1927.	Receipts.	Cinemas showing Indian Films only, from 1st January to 30th June 1927.	Receipts.	Difference in favour of Indian Films.
	Rs. A.		Rs. A.	Rs. A.
1. Empire Cinema .	88,147 13	1. Imperial Cinema	1,03,773 14	15,626 1
2. Pathe Cinema .	79,429 15	2. Majestic ..	97,964 0	18,534 1
3. Wellington Cinema .	74,483 6	3. Krishna ..	81,843 6	7,359 10
Total .	2,42,061 2	Total .	2,83,580 14	41,519 12

The above figures do not include tickets priced at four annas and under, which are not taxable.

*List showing prices of tickets of admission to cinemas before and after imposition of the Bombay Entertainments Duty Act of 1923.*

Name of Cinema.	Price of admission previous to tax enactment.	Price at present, or after enactment.	
			Tax Rs. A.
Excelsior Cinema and Empire Cinema.	Rs. A.		
	Box for 4 . . . 12 10	Rs. 10 . . . . .	1 8
	Sofa for 3 . . . 10 0	. . 9 . . . . .	1 2
	Orchestra stalls . . 2 8	. . 2 . . . . .	0 4
	Dress Circle . . . 2 8	. . 2 . . . . .	0 4
	Stalls . . . . . 1 4	. . 1 . . . . .	0 2
	Family Circle . . . 1 4	. . 1 . . . . .	0 2
	Pit Stalls . . . . 0 12	As . . . . .	0 1
Empress Cinema	Gallery . . . . . 0 4	. . 4 . . . . .	nil.
	Balcony . . . . . 2 0	Re. 1 . . . . .	0 2
	Stalls . . . . . 1 0	As 8 . . . . .	0 1
	Pit Stalls . . . . 0 8	. . 4 . . . . .	nil.
	Gallery . . . . . 0 4	. . 2 . . . . .	
Globe Cinema	Box . . . . . 2 0	Box, Rs. 1-12 . . . . .	0 4
	Stalls . . . . . 1 8	Balcony, As. 14 . . . . .	0 2
	Balcony . . . . . 1 0	Stall Box, As. 10 . . . . .	0 2
	Reserved class . . 0 12	First class, As. 7 . . . . .	0 1
	First class . . . . 0 12	Second class, As. 4 . . . . .	nil.
	Second class . . . 0 6	Third class, As. 3 . . . . .	
	Third class . . . . 0 2		
Imperial Cinema	Balcony . . . . . 2 0 and 1 8	Box 4 seats, Rs. 8 . . . . .	1 8
	Reserved class . . 1 0	Balcony Sofa, Rs. 2 . . . . .	0 4
	First class . . . . 0 12	Balcony, Rs. 1-5 . . . . .	0 4
	Second class . . . 0 6	Reserved, Re. 1 . . . . .	0 2
	Third class . . . . 0 3	First class, As. 12 . . . . .	0 2
		Second class, As. 6 . . . . .	0 1
		Third class, As. 3 . . . . .	nil.

*List showing prices of tickets of admission to cinemas before and after imposition of the Bombay Entertainments Duty Act of 1923.*

Name of Cinema.	Price of admission previous to tax enactment.	Price at present, or after enactment.
	Rs. A.	Tax Rs. A.
Majestic Cinema	Box . . . . . 2 0	Box, Rs. 2 . . . . . 0 4
	Balcony . . . . . 1 8	Balcony, Rs. 1-4 . . . . . 0 4
	Reserved class . . . . . 1 0	Reserved, Rs. 1 . . . . . 0 2
	First class . . . . . 0 12	, half, As. 8 . . . . . 0 1
	Second class . . . . . 0 6	First class, As. 12 . . . . . 0 2
	Third class . . . . . 0 2	, half, As. 6 . . . . . 0 1
		Second class, As. 6 . . . . . 0 1
		Third class, As. 3 . . . . . nil.
Precious Cinema	Box . . . . . 2 0	Box for 4, Rs. 4 . . . . . 0
	Stalls . . . . . 1 0	Balcony, As. 10 . . . . . 0 2
	Reserved . . . . . 0 12	Family circle, As. 8 . . . . . 0
	First class . . . . . 0 12	First class, As. 6 . . . . . 0 1
	Second class . . . . . 0 6	Second class, As. 4 . . . . . nil.
	Third class . . . . . 0 2	Third class, As. 2 . . . . . 0
Royal Cinema	Box . . . . . 1 0	Box, Rs. 1 . . . . . 0 2
	First class . . . . . 0 8	First class, As. 8 . . . . . 0 1
	Second class . . . . . 0 4	Second class, As. 4 . . . . . nil.
	Third class . . . . . 0 2	Third class, As. 3 . . . . . 0
Royal Opera House	Box for 1 . . . . . 2 0	Box for 1 Rs. 2 . . . . . 0 4
	Stalls . . . . . 1 8	Box for 1 (dress circle), Rs. 1-12 . . . . . 0 4
	Dress circle . . . . . 1 0	Stalls Rs. 1-12 . . . . . 0 4
	Balcony . . . . . 0 8	Dress circle, Rs. 1-4 . . . . . 0 4
	Gallery . . . . . 0 4	Orchestra, As. 14 . . . . . 0 2
		Balcony, As. 7 . . . . . 0 1
		Gallery, As. 4 . . . . . nil.
Venus Cinema	Balcony . . . . . 1 8	Balcony, As. 14 . . . . . 0 2
	Box . . . . . 1 0	Box, As. 10 . . . . . 0 2
	First class . . . . . 0 12	First class, As. 7 . . . . . 0 1
	Second class . . . . . 0 8	Second class, As. 4 . . . . . nil.
	Third class . . . . . 0 4	Third class, As. 3 . . . . . 0

*List showing prices of tickets of admission to cinemas before and after imposition of the Bombay Entertainments Duty Act of 1923.*

Name of Cinema.	Price of admission previous to tax enactment.	• Price at present, or after enactment.
	Rs. A.	Tax Rs. A.
West End Cinema	Box . . . . 2 0	Box, Rs. 2 . . . . 0 4
	Sofa . . . . 1 0	Sofa, Re. 1 . . . . 0 2
	First class . . 0 12	First class, As. 12 . . . . 0 2
	Second class . . 0 6	Second class, As. 6 . . . . 0 1
	Third class . . 0 2	Third class, As. 3 . . . . nil.
Alexandra Cinema	Built after imposition of tax.	Box, Rs. 1-1 . . . . 0 4
		Balcony, As. 14 . . . . 0 2
		First class, As. 8 . . . . 0 1
		„ half, As. 4 . . . . nil.
		Second class, As. 4 . . . . „
Crown Cinema		Third class, As. 2 . . . . „
		Reserved . . . . 1 8
		Box Balcony, As. 14 . . . . 0 2
		First class . . . . 1 0
		Balcony, As. 16 . . . . 0 2
Edward Cinema	Used for Theatrical Companies before tax.	First class, As. 7 . . . . 0 1
		Second class, As. 4 . . . . 0 1
		Third class, As. 3 . . . . nil.
		Stalls, Re. 1 . . . . 0 2
Edward Cinema		Dress circle, As. 10 . . . . 0 2
		Stalls, As. 8 . . . . 0 1
		Pit Stalls, As. 7 . . . . 0 1
		Family Circle, As. 4 . . . . nil.
Edward Cinema		Gallery, As. 2 . . . . „

*List showing prices of tickets of admission to cinemas before and after imposition of the Bombay Entertainments Duty Act of 1923.*

Name of Cinema.	Price of admission previous to tax enactment.	Price at present, or after enactment.	
		Rs. A	Tax Rs. A.
Krishna Cinema	Used for Theatrical Companies before tax.	Box, Rs. 1-12	0 4
		Balcony, Rs. 1-4	0 4
		„ half, As. 10	0 2
		Reserved, As. 14	0 2
		„ half, As. 7	0 1
		First class, As. 12	0 2
		„ half, As. 6	0 1
		Second class, As. 6	0 1
		Inter class, As. 4	nil.
		Third class, As. 3	„
Laxmi Cinema	Built after imposition of tax.	Stalls, As. 8	0 1
		Reserved, As. 6	0 1
		Ladies, As. 4	nil.
		First class, As. 4	„
		Second class, As. 3	„
Novelty Cinema	Used for Theatrical Companies before tax.	Box, Rs. 1	0 2
		Balcony, As. 12	0 2
		First class, As. 7	0 1
		Second class, As. 4	nil.
		Third class, As. 3	„
Saraswati Cinema	Built after imposition of tax.	First class, As. 8	0 1
		Second class, As. 4	nil.
		Ladies, As. 4	„
		Third class, As. 3	„
Wellington Cinema	Built after imposition of tax.	Box, Rs. 2	0 4
		Sofa, Rs. 1	0 2
		First class, As. 12	0 2
		Second class, As. 6	0 1
		Third class, As. 3	nil.



## Written Statement of Mr. R. K. MHATRE, Assistant Director of Public Health.

### (Replies to Questionnaire.)

1. No.

2. (a) More Indians of the illiterate classes frequent cinemas than those from among the educated classes. Day by day the tendency of the illiterate classes towards visiting cinemas is increasing. The educated middle class realises the family responsibilities and is therefore more discriminate in its expenses whereas the illiterate class not being so, is easily attracted by amusement such as a cinema show.

My answer refers to casual observations in Bombay.

(c) About 10 to 15 per cent. of the audience consists of children under 14 and 30 to 40 per cent. of adolescents.

3. The classes of films most popular with Indian audiences are those depicting romance, mythology and adventures.

4. The exhibitors are beginning to cater for Indian audiences but not adequately.

5. Indian produced films have become readily available now to exhibitors but it cannot be said that they depict real Indian life. Much of what is exhibited is copied from foreign films and shown under Indian garb.

(a) No.

(b) With the illiterate class of audience any motion picture on the screen becomes popular. But most of the Indian films so far produced have not become popular with the educated classes of good taste.

(c) From the rapid production of new films almost every week it is possible that it is more profitable to show an Indian film than a Western film.

Some of the films produced by the Maharashtra Film Co. of Kolhapur have in my opinion been successful.

6. (a) Such films would be more popular with Indian audiences than the prevalent Western films.

(b) (1) Exhibition of social dramas depicting Indian life on the screen, topical Indian news, and educative films would appeal most strongly to the educated classes.

(2) The illiterate population would be more attracted by mythological subjects.

14. The growth of film industry in this country would be considerably helped by the increased use of cinema for educational purposes. For Public Health propaganda there can be no better means of inculcating knowledge in regard to public health measures and preventive medicine among the masses than showing films on different subjects. In Western countries cinemas are very largely used for this kind of propaganda work.

There is no demand for such films at present because very few exist. The sanitary conscience of the public is being gradually awakened by carrying on public health propaganda and it will not be long before a field for greater demand for such educative films will be created.

15. Yes. For the production of good Indian films it would be essential to maintain the indigenous characteristics and for this purpose films can be produced advantageously in this country where the required men, material and scenery are to be found.

16. There are some good Indian producers and so far as their photography is concerned the films compare favourably with Western films. There are no professional actresses in India and the stage as well as the screen are thereby greatly handicapped. The present actresses for cinema films in Bombay are from among the prostitutes who are taking to cinema as a supplementary profession.

17. There are capitalist in India who could easily afford to run a film producing industry and there is no reason why sufficient capital should not come forth. Their attention is not yet sufficiently diverted to this industry owing to lack of artistic instinct.

19. The standard of cinema films as compared with that of Western films is very low due to want of sufficient capital. The production of films of the present standard must necessarily be cheaper than foreign films but if the standard is raised by skilled labour and increased capital there should not be much difference in the cost of producing Indian film as compared with that of the other.

23. (a) To a large extent.

24. (a) There are many films being exhibited which are likely to have a demoralising and injurious effect upon the public.

(b) Yes, particularly the criminally suggestive films. Some of the recent dacoities in Bombay show that much has been learnt from such films.

(c) Films depicting romantic stories and love affairs are harmful to the younger people.

(e) The cinema has been responsible for the improved and systematic methods now being adopted in certain thefts and dacoities.

25. Yes. The differences in social customs and outlook between the West and the East would necessitate special consideration in the censorship of films. There are certain features of Western social life which to an Indian mind may appear immoral, indecent or offensive although from a Western point of view they are not at all so.

27. (a) Western films are greatly misunderstood by the uneducated Indian as evidenced from their behaviour at the cinema theatres. Innocent action such as embracing or kissing are hissed and jeered at through their ignorance of Western social life and customs.

29. Yes.

30. Yes. Childhood is the most impressionable age and whatever undesirable incidents are seen during this period of life must influence the formation of an individual's character in later life.

Children under twelve should be prohibited from visiting cinemas except for special children's performances.

36. (a) No.

No special qualifications can be laid down for a person required to examine the films. But men of culture with an artistic taste would be suitable for the purpose.

(b) Yes. There should be no difficulty in securing gentlemen of suitable standing who would devote sufficient time to the examination of films for some remuneration.

40. Yes.

There are many posters and advertisements now-a-days exhibited at cinema theatres. Some of these are objectionable considering their effect on children and the illiterate class of people.

### **Oral Evidence of Mr. R. K. MHATRE, Assistant Director of Public Health, on the 8th November 1927.**

*Chairman:* Mr. Mahatre, how long have you held this appointment of Assistant Director of Public Health?

A. Since last June.

Q. And before that?

A. I am one of the permanent Assistant Health Officers in the Bombay Municipality.

Q. And have you travelled in the west?

A. Yes, I have.

Q. Frequently?

A. Once only, for my education.

Q. How long ago was that?

A. That was in 1913; I was there for two years.

Q. That was in England?

A. Yes.

Q. And do you go to the cinema frequently?

A. Well, I used to when I was in Bombay, about once in two months.

Q. Do you think that the cinema is getting very popular with the people?

A. Yes, it is.

Q. And there is a growing demand?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you say that the Indian films are getting more and more popular?

A. Yes, they are getting popular. But I have said that this is so not with the educated class of people but with the illiterate.

Q. Why is that Indian films are not popular with the Indians?

A. I cannot mention any but I think most of them are not popular. The uneducated and the illiterate class of people generally attend the theatres where the Indian films are shown. That is what I have observed.

Q. Do you frequent these cinemas where these labouring classes attend?

A. Some of them I have seen.

Q. Is there any improvement noticeable in the Indian productions?

A. Well, there is I think on the whole.

Q. What do you think is wrong with the Indian films?

A. I think they have not got sufficient actors or men who are trained in acting for the screen, neither men nor women.

Q. Do you suggest that any measures should be taken for improving that?

A. They ought to be trained.

Q. Do you think there is anything which the Government should do in that direction?

A. I cannot say.

Q. Is that the only defect you notice about Indian films?

A. And also as regards photography. Some of them have been producing good photographic work, others are not so good.

Q. More or less the matter is being remedied by the trade itself. The two defects you have mentioned call for an organisation on the part of the trade itself.

A. Exactly. No outside help is necessary in that connection.

Q. Nor from the public or the general tax-payer? Do you think the general tax-payer has to take any interest in this matter in order to improve it?

A. I do not think so.

Q. Are any of these films produced by the Imperial Film Company you referred to shown on the screen here in Bombay?

A. They used to be some time ago. I do not know if they are shown now. When a new film is produced it is shown first in Bombay.

Q. I suppose you attend cinemas in the Fort also?

A. I used to.

Q. And you think there is plenty of scope for improving the film industry in the direction of educational purposes and propaganda purposes, public health propaganda?

A. Yes.

Q. And you are very much concerned with public health propaganda. Are you sufficiently provided with films for educating the people in that direction?

A. We are not at present.

Q. And why is it you have not got them?

A. The Public Health Department have not got any films at present.

Q. What prevents you from having the films made or brought out?

A. Such films are not made at present here in India and those that we want have to be purchased from England. There are some films now produced relating to maternity and child welfare which are occasionally shown in the baby week celebrations here. There is an increasing demand for these.

Q. You think the public cares for them?

A. They do.

Q. Do you think the public will pay a fee or will you show them free?

A. So far we have been showing them free and attracting some crowds but I do not see any objection to the public paying. They would.

Q. You think even if you charge a nominal fee the public would care to attend these shows?

A. They would.

Q. You think the Government ought to produce such films for public propaganda purposes.

A. Or the Government should help in producing such films.

Q. Help whom?

A. Help the producers. Give the necessary material, provide the necessary material for producing such films.

Q. You mean to say a trader is interested in producing public health propaganda films?

A. No, he is not.

Q. And therefore what do you mean by suggesting that the Government should help people to do that?

A. The producer will require some help from the Government institutions for the production of such films.

Q. You mean, if there is a producer who produces films of general interest, and he seeks Government assistance, he should be given it with the condition added that he should also manufacture public health films. That is your idea?

A. Yes.

Q. And that also applies to educational films?

A. Yes.

Q. You think it will be of great use to the country if such a thing is started?

A. I think so, so far as my department is concerned.

Q. And do you use lantern slides?

A. We do at present use magic lantern slides.

Q. I have seen some such films in the Public Health Department in Madras.

A. I have seen them.

Q. Do you think for such subjects a central authority is more suitable to produce films than individual provinces. It would be reduplicating work if each province were allowed to make its own films with the object of health propaganda.

A. It would be more convenient if there is a central authority for introducing the things into the different provinces.

Q. And what do you think the contribution of the different provinces should be?

A. I cannot say.

Q. It was suggested by the last witness that it is more the function of the Local Government, being a transferred subject. But if each Local Government were to go its own way, it is merely an added burden to the tax-payer generally in reduplicating work. So that a central authority would be more useful in dealing with such a subject.

A. Yes.

Q. I see in answer to question No. 15 you deplore the fact that actresses are not available. Have you any suggestion to make how to attract actresses?

A. No, I cannot say.

Q. You say that sufficient capital is available but it does not come forward owing to the lack of the artistic instinct. But surely, if it is a paying concern, whether for artistic or any other purposes, capital would be attracted. I want to understand your answer. Will it be a paying proposition?

A. It will be a paying proposition but what I mean to say is that capitalists have no liking for such things.

Q. But what does it matter to them whether it is artistic or inartistic if it is a paying proposition? Anyway I leave it there.

Now you have got a definite statement in 24 (b), which I would like to pursue. You make particular reference to the criminally suggestive films. Have you got anything particular in mind. What sort of films?

A. When I read some reports of thefts and dacoities in some papers it at once reminds me of certain films. I cannot state exactly which films these were, but such things as gagging after committing thefts and running away in motor cars.

Q. Surely those are more due to motor cars than to films? I think it is the advent of motor cars that is partly responsible for these things.

A. I thought that the idea must come from some cinema films.

Q. I myself have been labouring under that impression. In fact, when I pursue that matter, I am in sympathy with you. But what steps can we take to prevent such knowledge spreading? It is really knowledge of world conditions, both good and bad. And what steps can be taken to prevent the spread of such knowledge? Is it right to prevent the spread of such knowledge? You may as well say that the discoveries made by science in various matters can be criminally used by certain people. Can you blame the cinema for it?

A. I do not blame, but to a certain extent the cinema films are responsible for that.

Q. Just as I suppose students who learn chemistry are supposed to make bombs?

A. Yes.

Q. Well, how are you to prevent those things? Is the cinema particularly to blame in that direction?

A. You cannot prevent it.

Q. I do not know if you are familiar with the rules adopted by the Censorship Board in Bombay?

A. I am not.

Q. They have got certain rules to prevent such class of films being shown. Can you improve on those rules, that is what I want to know. If you do not know the rules I shall not pursue the question. Question No. 27 (a)—You say that so far as the city of Bombay is concerned, the uneducated classes hardly see western films?

A. Some of them do.

Q. You go to the extent of not showing embracing or kissing?

A. I mean these actions are misunderstood by them.

**Q.** What are you to do in that case? Would you prohibit such things being shown on the screen? Would you prohibit a drama being shown in that way? For instance, the western companies, the Italian Opera Company, and some other western companies perform. Would you prevent them from performing?

**A.** No. I would not.

**Q.** Supposing you are correct in your impression that even embracing and kissing are misunderstood—may I read your written statement? "Western films are greatly misunderstood by the uneducated Indians as evidenced from their behaviour at the cinema theatres. Innocent actions such as embracing or kissing are hissed and jeered at....." Have you seen instances where they jeered at it?

**A.** Yes. Very often we have seen it in the cinemas.

**Q.** Where western films are shown?

**A.** Yes. There is nothing bad in the film, but the people who see do not understand it and that is why they try to jeer at it.

**Q.** What is the remedy for that state of things?

**A.** Just to educate the people. The remedy is to raise the educational standard.

**Q.** Not to stifle knowledge, but to educate people? That is the remedy?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Without such things no man will go to the cinema? (Laughter)

**A.** I quite understand that.

**Q.** I suppose you are for a special children's day?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Children under what age?

**A.** Under 12.

**Q.** You would advocate a special programme for children's day?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** We have just heard from Mr. Stenson that he has not found any objectionable posters, but you refer to some objectionable posters. Have you seen anything like that?

**A.** I saw one some months ago. When I first saw the poster I was struck that it was not quite a decent poster to be placed in front of a cinema theatre. I cannot tell you which one it was now.

**Q.** Therefore you would advocate that there should be a censorship of posters as well?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Just as there is censorship of films?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** I suppose most of these posters are imported ones?

**A.** Some of them are painted here for the Indian films.

**Q.** Did you find Indian posters objectionable?

**A.** Yes. I referred to one of the Indian posters.

**Q.** And what about the foreign posters?

**A.** Some of them are bad.

**Q.** You would advocate censorship of them also?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Of both the locally produced posters and foreign posters?

**A.** Yes.

**Mr. Green:** May I ask what areas are comprised in your present charge. They are not merely Bombay at present?

A. I have got five districts in my charge. They are East and West Khandesh, Nasik District, Thana, Colaba and Bombay suburbs.

Q. Have you seen any cinema exhibited in these districts?

A. No. Recently I saw one in Nasik, and that, too, in connection with my work. I went to show the people one film on leprosy, and to attract the audience, before the leprosy film was shown, the Municipality showed some comic film.

Q. That was an Indian film?

A. That was a foreign film.

Q. That amused the audience?

A. Just to attract the people. Before the leprosy film was shown that comic film was exhibited.

Q. What you have told us has chiefly or almost entirely to do with Bombay city?

A. Yes.

Q. You are naturally keen on having propaganda films for your own department?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think it would be practicable in any way to compel cinema owners to exhibit such films in their ordinary programme or do you think it will be necessary to have them separately?

A. There would be a separate agency for showing these films. I do not think the cinema owners or theatre owners will care to show these films.

Q. The Chairman has asked you several questions regarding censorship in connection with your reply to question No. 24. I do not want to press you any further except that we are very anxious to get definite statements regarding definite films that are objectionable. Can you give us any definite film, or name any film?

A. I am sorry I cannot, because I cannot remember any now.

Q. Was there any film bad enough that you felt moved to complain to the police or the district magistrate or the Board of Censors?

A. No. There is a mixture of films and I cannot exactly tell you which one was bad.

Q. May I take it more as a general impression rather than that definite films offended you?

A. Yes.

Q. Films depicting romantic stories and love affairs in your opinion are harmful to the younger people. Younger people of all nationalities or Indians only?

A. All nationalities I should think.

Q. It has been represented that to the Indian mind any form of courtship or wooing is a matter of very doubtful propriety.

A. Yes.

Q. Is that a correct statement? The Chairman has asked you about kissing. If courtship itself is regarded as not a proper subject, kissing I quite agree will be even more so. Do you think that Indians who on the films see representations of western methods of courtship consider it immoral or indecent?

A. Particularly the uneducated classes.

Q. Even in Bombay city?

A. Yes.

Q. You personally do not object to it, but only the uneducated?

A. Yes.

*Q.* You are not satisfied with the present system of censoring films at Bombay and Calcutta by which the films are ordinarily inspected in the first place by Inspectors?

*A.* By one Inspector.

*Q.* You are not satisfied with it?

*A.* No.

*Q.* You do not exactly say why you are not satisfied. Could you expand it a little further?

*A.* Instead of leaving it to one man it would be better to have it done by more than one.

*Q.* It is not so much a question of the Inspector's qualifications? Actually the present Inspector is a man of high educational qualifications who has also travelled abroad. The Secretary who also examines films has, I think, no less than three degrees including English degrees. You do not mean to say that particular officers in Bombay are not up to their job?

*A.* I do not mean to say that.

*Q.* You want more than one man to see every film?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* That brings us to 36 (b). You consider that all films should be examined actually by members of the Board?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* The difficulty about that has always been one of expense. The Film Board have to pay their way from fees collected from the industry and Bombay has just recently become solvent and I believe Calcutta has also. But if they are going to do much more inspection, it means considerable increase of fees. If two members have got to see every film, you have got to pay them for doing so, I take it?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Do you consider that the present Board of 6 can find time to inspect?

*A.* They can find time I think.

*Q.* Are you aware of the total length of films examined monthly?

*A.* I do not know.

*Q.* I cannot say definitely, but I think it is a matter of at least 10 hours work a week and I should say more, actually seeing the films. Apart from that the examiner has to write his reports. Would you consider it necessary to increase the number of censors?

*A.* That is what I think.

*Q.* Do you think you will get gentlemen who would devote sufficient time—by sufficient time I do not mean going to the cinema once or twice a week, I mean who would be prepared to go every day and work for at least 4 or 5 hours?

*A.* Every day?

*Q.* Yes. I ask you this question for this reason that under the British system they have stipendiary censors. They work from 10 o'clock to 5 o'clock every day, five days a week. Two censors see every film and it takes 4 censors altogether to do the work. They examine 5 or 6 million feet a year a censor, and they get paid fees for that. Do you think we can get gentlemen to work except for a full remuneration to do such work in Bombay?

*A.* It will all depend. If they are paid adequately you will get men.

*Q.* What pay would be adequate?

*A.* I have not studied it from a financial point of view.

*Q.* I do not want to press you on that point. Thank you.

*Col. Crawford:* In your answer to question 5 (b) you say that most of the Indian films so far produced have not become popular with the educated classes of good taste. One of our witnesses the other day said that a film



called " Sacrifice " which had just been running in Bombay had attracted the educated classes for the first time. Did you see the film?

A. I have not seen it. I have read the advertisement. That is one depicting a story written by Sir Rabindranath Tagore. That has been advertised, but I have not seen it to say whether it was a success or not.

Q. From the educated classes point of view?

A. Yes.

Q. Your answer to question No. 15 gives me to understand that you think the position is satisfactory (reads). In your verbal answer just now you said the position is not satisfactory for various reasons.

A. In answer 15 I say we had the required men, material and scenery.

Q. The impression I got from your answer to question No. 15 was that you were quite satisfied so far as the indigenous industry was concerned, that everything was all right.

A. For the future production of films the material is available here.

Q. With the proviso that it has got to be trained?

A. Yes.

Q. You also say that so far as photography is concerned the films here compare favourably with western films?

A. Some of them.

Q. In your verbal answer just now I thought you said that the photography was very bad?

A. Some are good, some are bad.

Q. You cannot give specific instances of dacoities?

A. No, I cannot. That is my impression.

Q. Now look at your answer to question No. 25. You say, " The differences in social customs and outlook between the West and the East would necessitate special consideration in the censorship of films. There are certain features of Western social life which to an Indian mind *may* appear immoral, indecent or offensive..... " Do you mean they *do* appear immoral?

A. But the action itself is not immoral.

Q. So far as the Indian mind is concerned, they *do* appear immoral—there is no doubt from their point of view?

A. To the illiterate and uneducated classes.

Q. You think they definitely *do* appear immoral to them?

A. They do.

Q. Would you give me your own impression of the effect of western films? What do you think of them yourself—western films generally shown in India? What do you think about them?

A. Some of them are bad I suppose.

Q. Do you think they are truly representative of western life?

A. They are not.

Q. You have been to England?

A. Yes.

Q. You would agree they are not representative. What do you say is wrong with the western films yourself?

A. Some of the women shown on the screen are not sufficiently dressed. From that point of view I think they are immoral.

Q. Do you suggest that censorship might be strict on that point?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you approve of these cabaret scenes and scenes of life in the under world of Paris and that sort of thing being shown?

A. No.

Q. Those might be censored also?

A. Yes.

Mr. Neogy: With regard to the point that the Indian films have not so far been very popular with the cultured Indian audiences, may I take the position to be this, that so far as the taste of the cinema going public is concerned, it has been largely determined by the foreign films and the Indian producer has merely been catering or has been trying to cater for that taste and he is not making any special effort to attract cultured audience which has so far kept away from the cinema—I mean cultured Indian audience. Is that the position?

A. Yes, it is so.

Q. You mention two factors that stand in the way of good Indian films being produced, deficiency in actors and actresses and the defective character of photography in certain cases. Are you satisfied with the selection of subjects? Don't the subjects sometimes strike you to be rather too crude to appeal to a cultured audience?

A. I think the subjects are properly selected. Some subjects are from the Hindu mythology.

Q. So far as mythology is concerned, it is quite all right.

A. Yes.

Q. But so far as adventure stories are concerned, or social stories which are written for the express purpose of being shown on the screen, are you quite satisfied with the selection of subjects?

A. I have not seen many such films.

Q. You complain that there are no professional actresses in India. What do you mean by this? We have in Bengal a certain class of women who go on the stage and they are considered to be very successful actresses.

A. Then I ought to change my statement and say so far as the Bombay Presidency is concerned. I do not know about Bengal.

Q. I may tell you that they are not drawn from respectable classes, but all the same they are considered to be very successful.

A. I do not know about it.

Q. You said that certain films do not represent western life truly. Are you satisfied that Indian produced films represent Indian life quite correctly?

A. Have I said so anywhere?

Q. You said that there are certain films where western life is not correctly represented. Are you quite satisfied that the Indian films from that point of view are always true to life?

A. They are not. I have said somewhere that some of the films are simply copies of foreign films shown in Indian garb.

Q. Can there be something inherent in the film industry itself which is responsible for certain exaggerated representations of certain aspects of life, or is it special only with regard to western films?

A. All films have to exaggerate in order to attract.

Q. If you were to make the censorship strict, you would make it uniformly strict in regard both to western and Indian films so far as that point of view is concerned?

A. Yes.

Q. You say, "Innocent actions such as embracing or kissing are biased and jeered at through their ignorance of western social life and customs." Can you from the fact that certain scenes are jeered at, deduce that the illiterate people who do that necessarily mean any contempt for that sort of life, or merely that that is their own way of expressing their appreciation or enjoyment?

A. It is not appreciation I think, but they consider something immoral in that.

Q. With regard to the question of censorship, as to whether men with sufficient time and experience will be available for doing the work on a remuneration, may I ask you whether there would be available men of sufficient standing and experience who would be prepared to sit from day to day, say, 1½ hours a day, on all working days of the week—say in sub-committees of two each? Can you say that there would be four such men available in Bombay who would be prepared to examine these films for 1½ hours a day for a moderate fee, just as the directors of a company may get for attending company meetings?

A. May I know what the moderate fee would be?

Q. Mr. Green could not give you the exact amount of work that was to be done, but I have got the Bombay figures for you. I find that 12,000 feet is the average length of films that is examined per day in Bombay, and judging from the fact that 4,000 feet will be examined in one hour I take it that it would involve three hours' work, and if we divide this work between two groups sitting simultaneously or at different times—then are you prepared to support my contention that a body four dividing itself into two groups and working for 1½ or 2 hours a day at the utmost, could be found in Bombay of sufficient standing to undertake the work on a remuneration of say, Rs. 20 per sitting per day?

A. I think so.

Mr. Green: According to the question of Mr. Neogy you assume you are going to have four gentlemen sitting every day, each drawing Rs. 20 to censor films. Do you think they would work indefinitely in the hot weather, in October, and not go to Mahabaleshwar or Poona? I am not talking in a joking spirit. I am seriously putting it to you.

A. I think if they get Rs. 20 for 1 or 1½ hours, they will work.

Q. Consider that we want these gentlemen to be of high social standing and possess a high standard of education, and if possible, with experience both of India and foreign countries. Would not such gentlemen prefer as a general rule, if I may say so, to become members of the Municipalities, of the Legislative Council, or even of the Legislative Assembly? It is assured gentlemen we want—gentlemen of leisure and education—and you still think you will get them?

A. I think so.

### **Oral Evidence of Mr. A. E. TYLDEN-PATTENSON, Chief Publicity Officer, Railway Board, on Tuesday, the 8th November 1927.**

Chairman: I suppose you have seen our questionnaire, Mr. Tylden-Pattenson?

A. I have just run through the questionnaire yes, but it did not seem to me to be particularly apposite to the work I am employed on though I thought it possible I could give you answers to any questions that would be material.

Q. Of course you are more helpful on the 'production side. I take it you are yourself interested in one branch of it. Do you find the conditions in the country quite suitable for film production?

A. Actually so far as film production is concerned, we do not ourselves do the developing or the printing of films; that is done for us by an outside agency. But we write the scenarios of films and we photograph them ourselves and then hand over the negative to a firm in Bombay. We employ one of the Indian firms in Bombay and they do the developing and the printing for us. Then we take the film over again and from

that stage we do the editing and the titling and finally produce the finished article.

Q. Do you get back the negative from them?

A. As a rule we let it stand with them depending on our requirements. Of some films we only require 2 copies but of others we may need 20 copies and we leave the negative with them until we have secured the requisite number of copies.

Q. And of course you get the co-operation of the Agricultural Department?

A. Yes, of several Departments of Government, the Agricultural and the Public Health Departments and Irrigation included. We have also prepared a film on "Rural Uplift", the idea being to educate the illiterate villager in sanitation and in the improvement of his housing and general betterment of his conditions of living.

Q. That has been produced after publication of your memorandum?

A. Yes, it is of a little later date. As a matter of fact this film has not been shown yet to anyone. We have it here and we shall be prepared to let you see it, if you so desire.

Q. We shall be very glad to see it.

A. Of course it is only a first attempt. It is obvious that it can be developed and made of considerable value.

Q. Of course your main purpose is to connect all your films as far as you can with railway development.

A. That is the motive underlying our efforts.

Q. And in carrying out the main object you also combine instruction with amusement, in order to attract the people.

A. That is so.

Q. I suppose it is possible—we heard it yesterday from a producer—that you can take as many copies as you want of a negative?

A. I do not know what the correct answer is to that question, but we have had as many as 20 or 30 copies and I see no reason why we could not, if necessary, and as in the case of ordinary photographic films, take prints indefinitely.

Q. One of the conditions you make with the firm that develops your negative is that they shall not make use of the film?

A. They have no rights and we are quite satisfied there is no infringement in this direction.

Q. Take the Agricultural Department. Do they do any work with the help of your films?

A. The Punjab Agricultural Department has had copies of films for circulation in its 'travelling cinema lorries',—I think they are called—and the Central Provinces Government have had the use of them for occasional exhibitions. They are frequently asked for too in connection with agricultural fairs. We showed them for a consecutive week at Poona in connection with the big agricultural fair which was opened there last year.

Q. I suppose you take advantage also of festivals?

A. Yes, we usually select the picture according to the circumstances and if there is a *melā* or important pilgrimage or anything of that kind we usually show pilgrimage and travel films.

Q. I suppose it is very popular with the people?

A. Very popular indeed.

Q. I notice in some places you get crowds of 8,000 or so.

A. That is the maximum but the tendency at a given station is a greater increase in the attendance every time we display films there.

**Q.** I notice you are trying to utilise some of these hired films in order to make the shows attractive. I suppose that is your object—some of those hired pictures of a lighter type?

**A.** Yes, we hire them from Madan's and from Pathe, and I personally examine every film that is sent out to see that it is suitable for display among the type of audiences we have to deal with.

**Q.** I notice on page 6 of your pamphlet that, as you find Indian film production undeveloped you are not able to show Indian films along with this to make the shows attractive?

**A.** We have so far, I think, shown only one Indian film and the general opinion, both Indian and European, was that it was not a good production.

**Q.** But we have heard it stated here, by Mr. Stenson and others, that the Indian-produced pictures are very popular in the cities. In fact there are several cinemas here which run only Indian pictures and they attract Indian crowds. So I was wondering whether you are not making a mistake in excluding them from your shows.

**A.** We do not exclude them. The point is we have found the others more popular. Actually we have got, I think, five—I don't think I could tell you the names at the moment—but we have five films on order which are considered by Madan & Co., to be among the best Indian productions and although they have been on order now for quite six months, we have not been able to secure a copy yet. "Krishna Kanta's Will" was one and "Jaiadev" another. It is our definite intention to show the best Indian films.

**Q.** There was a complaint—well, I won't call it a complaint but the Visual Instruction Officer who was here before as this morning rather felt that you do not help the Education Department of the Bombay Government as much as you might.

**A.** So far as I am aware we have never been approached by the Education Department. We have a very great deal of work to get through and more or less a programme was laid down on which we should develop our production. The first items in that programme were production of the primary products and we have actually gone through these, as you can see from the list in a very short time. We have a very great amount of other work: cinema film production is only one branch. And this has all been done in two years. There is no doubt we shall develop, and, as you see, we have just produced a film on rural uplift which is additional to the primary product subjects. We are quite willing to co-operate with all Government Departments and anyone expressing a wish for help will receive assistance. We give assistance to anybody who asks for it.

**Q.** It would be difficult no doubt but still at the same time I see in one of the paragraphs of your memorandum you also refer to the loan and sale of films produced by you. Page 9. Of course you make an exception I am sure in the case of the Education Department?

**A.** Well, you see the point. We have four State Railways to cover 13,000 miles of line. We have to prepare possibly 3 or 4 copies of the film and each copy probably costs us, depending on the length, say Rs. 2,000 or Rs. 3,000. Now we keep those films fully occupied; and if someone asks us for a copy it either means we have to take it off our railway cars, which would then lie idle, or make additional copies. It is a question whether we should be right in spending Rs. 3,000 from the Railway budget in order to hand it over to the educational budget.

**Q.** Unless incidentally it bears on the railways.

**A.** But that is the meaning of the particular remark to which you refer. As a matter of fact on numberless occasions we have loaned our films to various Departments of Government.

**Q.** What I wished to place before you was the Co-operative Department, the Education Department and the Agricultural Department—these three departments I thought might claim some concession from you because they

are all working for public education. And also the Public Health Department.

A. We actually considered we were giving a very great concession when we fixed our rate for supplying these films at 8 annas because that is our cost price exclusive of overhead charges.

Q. I suppose you would have no objection to let them pay for the copies.

A. Not at all, that is what I am hoping to encourage.

Q. If these departments want copies you have no objection?

A. We will make copies immediately and supply them within 4 or 5 days of receiving the order.

Q. Then do you think that if a central agency were established for producing educational films, public health films and agricultural propaganda films by the Central Government, do you think it would be right for us to advise the Government that it may look to your agency for that purpose—I mean to convert your agency into the central agency as you are already in the field?

A. I think that is a question I should have to refer to the Board. I should not like to say anything now.

Q. I would like to know from you whether there are any practical difficulties in that connection.

A. You will realise that we have not yet had a very great amount of experience and probably some further time would have to elapse before we should be in a position to actually take on work of the nature and scope that you propose.

Q. What I was thinking was more as a sort of feeler. Not that I have any definite views on the subject. Now that you are before us we should have the benefit of your views in the matter. If a central agency were established, as it has been suggested by some persons, to produce public health, educational films, etc., for mass education—you also deal in that of course, and instead of reduplicating agencies for that purpose, for instance you deal with agricultural films largely, so that it would be re-duplicating the work of the central authorities if we have two different authorities while one agency would be an advantage.

A. As my personal opinion I should say it would be desirable to utilise what already exists and to enlarge its scope and that this would be entirely practicable.

Q. Because several departments will give you the necessary technical advice.

A. It is quite easy for the man who has learnt scenario work to assimilate the particular phases of an activity which it is necessary to bring out on the films.

Q. Now I see from page 8 of your pamphlet that the ryot is only interested in pictures portraying his presidency and its people.

A. That relates to actual films of agricultural or local interest.

Q. Do you think it is the right view to take?

A. I have had that view expressed to me by officials from several different parts of India and particularly by the Deputy Commissioner, Gurgaon, and it has also been our own experience in showing films. If, for instance, we take the cotton film of the Central Provinces and show it in the Punjab there is very much less interest displayed in that picture there, than in the place and the neighbourhood where it was made.

Q. I am putting my question from the point of view of spreading other ideas in connection with these various industries, sugarcane-growing or improved agricultural methods or modern machinery, and it is rather disappointing to know that you cannot do those things.

A. At the same time I do not think it prevents one showing improvements or improved methods of working. You can teach quite a lot in

that way. Supposing you have a special type of plough which gives you increased productivity. The actual displaying of that machine in conjunction with local conditions on the picture will have considerable educative value. I repeat that I have had it confirmed from two or three different sources, and it is our experience that if we show in the United Provinces a picture depicting something about the south of India it does not attract the same amount of interest as a subject photographed locally.

Q. I got intimation by last mail to say that they are sending me some literature from Australia.

A. I have as a matter of fact, in my possession, a number of agricultural films prepared by the Agricultural Department in Canada but they are not as good as our own. There is one film however which has been very well received.

Q. I do not know if you frequent cinemas, but if you wish to say anything generally about the effect of the cinemas, we shall be glad to have your views?

A. I go to cinemas often, and I believe that the cinema has an immense power for education. It is bound to develop and there can be no question on this point.

Q. There are one or two complaints on which I should like to have your opinion, and that is about the western life being depicted here in a way that lowers westerners in the estimation of the ordinary uncultured Indian?

A. I think that does apply to certain types of films that come out to this country.

Q. Have you any suggestions to make in that direction?

A. It can only be controlled by proper censorship.

Q. Of course, if it is a case of actual indecency, censorship will come in. But we have different ideas as to kissing and embracing. You cannot stop all that unless you stop the European coming out to this country. How can you have an attractive picture without depicting western scenes?

A. I think it is rather difficult to deal with the subject generally and as a whole, but it has occurred to me on more than one occasion that certain scenes which are sent out to this country are not really suited to the Indian public.

Q. Although they are suited to the European public? Because I have seen that statement definitely made in one or two communications made to the Government of India that although such films are quite suited to European audiences they are not suited to the Indian audiences. They want a general clause saying that such films are unsuitable to the east although they are suitable for the west. That is the latest recommendation. Do you think such a thing is possible?

A. I think a degree of censorship is possible.

Q. In putting forward that view, I suppose you would advocate each film being censored by a mixed Board of Censors?

A. Yes, that would be a better method of securing the result instead of leaving it to one individual or community.

Q. Then you would advocate a Central Board to pass these films?

A. Yes, there should be a Board of Censors and a central organization is desirable. I am also of the opinion that such a central organization should be in a port town.

Q. You think that the complaint about the overdoing of the exhibition of the western or eastern life in a peculiar way should be left to censorship by the central organization rather than by any general rule?

A. I think it is the most desirable way of dealing with it.

Q. There is another statement made about what are called the criminally suggestive films. I mean films suggesting methods of crime or teaching

new methods of crime. You have to show adventures, but some people learn new methods of adventure?

A. I think the scope of that could be covered by the same form of censorship.

Q. Do you think really from your experience that new methods of crime have been introduced by the Cinema?

A. I do not think my experience covers that.

Mr. Neogy: You said that so far as the developing and printing of these films is concerned, you get all that done with the help of a private agency, and as for the rest of the production, i.e., the weaving of the story, scenario writing, selection of actors and actresses, and then filming the thing,—do you get all this done under expert advice or guidance?

A. I should say certainly 75 per cent. For instance, if it is an agricultural film we work directly in conjunction with the Director of Agriculture, and in the case of the Rural Uplift film, we worked practically entirely with the officer who actually organizes those activities, i.e., the Deputy Commissioner. We are always in direct touch with the Provincial Governments for those purposes.

Q. Who makes the choice of the subjects, the selection of actors and actresses?

A. Actors and actresses have not really come very much into our work at present.

Q. Travel films for instance?

A. We do not employ actors and actresses. We merely take the picture of the train and of people in the train going and of the ordinary travelling public. In a recent film that we produced on a different subject, 'Safety First', we employed actors and actresses, and we got remarkably good results. We got these actors and actresses through the agency of a firm in Bombay.

Q. You have no staff of your own?

A. No, we do not keep a staff.

Q. You find the work quite satisfactory?

A. Their work is very good indeed.

Q. Who does the direction in these cases?

A. We do it ourselves. Occasionally we employ someone who has experience of it. We have actually an officer who has been working on this business for about 2 years. He is on leave at the moment, but he has been taking additional study at Home with the Gaumont Film Co., and when he comes back, he will be in direct charge of this work. He has had no previous experience, but he worked in conjunction with the film companies locally and practically understudied the work in Bombay.

Q. Now, one of the complaints of the educational officer who appeared before us this morning was that whereas you charged them 8 annas a foot, they could get readymade films in the market at 4 annas a foot. I believe this 8 annas represents your bare cost. How do you account for this difference?

A. Those films are produced on mass production lines and they come into the country cheap, and they do not cost the dealers even 2½ annas. That is to say, when they arrive in the country, the actual price to the man who buys them here in Bombay, I am told, comes to a little less than 2½ annas. Our higher costs are based on the fact that our production is comparatively small, that we have to pay certain rates for buying our negatives, certain rates for our positives, certain rates for developing and printing, certain rates for joining, titling and so on. For all these things the cost is very little to the people who undertake on mass production lines. But 8 annas was the figure I arrived at as a reasonable sale price for us after very careful consideration.



**Q.** Have you considered the desirability of going up to the Government of India with a proposal for admitting raw films and other things that are required for the manufacture of cinema films, duty free?

**A.** We have not done so yet, because I am sure if such a proposal were submitted to Government, it would be turned down. No application has been made to Government in respect of films, because the amount involved is so small owing to the limited extent of our present activities that it would not be worth our while to put up such a proposal.

**Q.** But looking at it from the point of view of the film industry, this is one of the points which has been made by some other film producers in India. I believe if that proposal were made, you would support it?

**A.** Oh yes, we are quite willing to support it. But our work has not been sufficiently extensive to warrant our making a proposition of that kind ourselves up to the present time.

**Q.** Then, the Chairman asked you whether you would be prepared to undertake, if a decision were taken to have a central agency, for the production and supply of films of education interest to all the local Governments and railways, and your answer was in the affirmative?

**A.** My answer is that I am not in a position to reply, because it would be necessary to make a reference to the Railway Board, but in my personal opinion it would be quite practicable.

**Q.** Supposing the proposal took quite a different shape and it was suggested that a central agency should be set up and that the railways also should be asked to take their supplies from that central agency along with the provinces, do you think there will be any special objection from the railway point of view?

**A.** The Railways would oppose it definitely.

**Q.** That is to say, you cannot depend upon a central agency in which you yourself are not represented?

**A.** The railways, I am quite sure, would definitely oppose such a proposal on those grounds.

**Q.** I find that you refer to the fact that certain of your films which are intended to popularise your railway are being exhibited overseas? How do you arrange for the exhibition of such films in other countries?

**A.** We have different methods in different countries. Our heaviest work in that connection has been in Canada and the States, because the first film and practically the only film which has been produced with the object of showing the tourist value of India, was produced for American consumption, i.e., we went out of our way to make it more attractive to tourists from America and Canada. To ensure a really good circulation we employed the agency of the Canadian Pacific Railway which has, I think, over 200 branches in all the principal towns of Canada and America, and through them we arranged for the exhibition of our films. I do not know what procedure they adopted, but we paid nothing for their work.

**Q.** Have you tried to show the film elsewhere?

**A.** We have shown the films in special places where tourists are regularly to be found, we have shown them on certain P. & O. and German pleasure vessels. Again a number of films have been used in England. I think one of the places where they have been shown is the Indian Imperial Institute in London but I am not absolutely certain of that. They have also been shown in public theatres.

**Q.** Have you to pay anything for that facility?

**A.** I am hoping to make public displayers pay us. I think to a certain extent we shall succeed in this, because there is no doubt that if you take the most attractive parts of thousands of feet of our films, it makes a very good topical gazette.

**Q.** Did you make all these films specially for exhibition in foreign countries?

**A.** I should think that quite 75 per cent. of our films have been made for Indian consumption, but parts of them have been taken and put together to form topical reels to send Home. With the exception of that one particular film which was made entirely with the object of attracting the tourists, the rest were almost all made for Indian consumption. The short Winter tour of India was produced for India. Parts of it only have been used as topical gazette.

**Q.** Does your experience in this line of exhibiting films abroad lead you to hope that Indian-made films generally may have a favourable market overseas—I am not talking of the railway films?

**A.** I am quite certain that it will be possible to produce films in this country which would have a wonderful reception, because the setting that you have here is in my opinion second to none.

**Q.** You said that you would like to see the censorship tightened up. Are you prepared to lay down a standard of censorship so as to permit only the films of such a type as would suit the illiterate people, *i.e.*, would you allow only those pictures to be shown in India which might safely be shown to the illiterate masses?

**A.** I think that is rather a hard and fast line to draw. It seems to me that the question of censorship is largely a matter of commonsense. When it comes to actually censoring a film, if you go through pictures day after day, as people who are censors do, it becomes a fairly easy matter for an educated man to say what should be shown and what should not be shown to the illiterate masses, and I am of opinion that if you have a Board of Censors who understand what their business is, there should be no difficulty at all in this.

**Q.** I take it that you are not satisfied with the present work of the existing Board of Censors?

**A.** I have certainly seen films which I should not have passed.

*Chairman:* I suppose the answer you have just given applies to films which are also shown in England?

**A.** Yes.

*Mr. Neogy:* I find from your memorandum that you have films dealing with agricultural subjects. Yesterday I received a letter from a gentleman who is prominently associated with the All-India Cow Conference in Calcutta. In that letter he refers to the fact that that Conference had addressed a letter to the Railway Board making certain specific suggestions, and that that letter has not received attention yet. I don't suppose it has come to your knowledge?

**A.** I personally remember having seen an answer to it.

**Q.** That shows the popularity of your new work in this direction and how people appreciate it?

**A.** I think they made rather a large request, but I cannot actually remember what it was. We have dozens and dozens of applications. Anyhow, I will make a note of it. (The witness made a note of this in his note book). [Added note—I have now offered to make copies of any of our films for this Association at 5 annas per foot.]

**Q.** I find that you are introducing films of general interest that is to say, imported films in addition to those that are made in India, and you are also entering into a contract with Madans for some of them. What is the exact place which these films of general interest occupy in your programme of exhibition? Are they merely intended to attract the crowds?

**A.** They are not intended to attract the crowds. They are intended to brighten the programme. I do not know if you have ever witnessed a two hours' technical film. If you do so you will realise that it is apt to drag and become very tiring.

*Chairman:* It is not tiring for those who are interested in the subject?

A. We are thinking now particularly of the Railways. You take the workshops in a big place like Jhansi and you proceed to show the staff a two hours' film illustrating the working of the different machines in the shops, and the audience after a long day's work in those shops gets tired of it. But if you give them something of a lighter nature to mix with the technical film, they take and appreciate both.

*Col. Crawford:* I must apologise to you for not being here in time. Is it possible to give the work that you now do to Indian companies here? You give now a certain proportion of your work?

A. Really a very small proportion is given outside, and that only because the officer who is in charge of this particular business has been away on leave.

Q. All your developing and printing?

A. I thought you were talking of the taking of the picture; this we do ourselves.

Q. Is there no direction from you?

A. We find it more suitable for the purpose of control to have our own operator on the spot and under our control because he can be sent out anywhere at a moment's notice.

Q. You do not think that the present Indian companies are capable of carrying out a general scheme which you might put forward?

A. I would not like to say that. I think it is better run departmentally than by contract. We have not had enough experience, but as we go on, we do learn a considerable amount as to what peoples' requirements are. We send our own staff out to give displays and we learn from them what the audience have to say. We then know that such and such a picture did not have enough movement in it and we then introduce more movement of the kind wanted into the next picture of that type. On the whole, we learn much as we go along.

Q. But your chief objection for not giving the contract to Indian producing companies is that they are not quite efficient enough?

A. I think they are not sufficiently expert in technique at present as, for example are the American producing companies. We can certainly do the work better ourselves. After all, it is mainly a question of experience.

Q. Will there be scope, when these Indian companies have made themselves efficient, for giving them work?

A. There will be scope in various branches.

Q. Have you used any American experts in your work?

A. Actually covering the whole period since our production began originally on the Great Indian Peninsula Railway, I do not think we ever employed an American, but there is one man in Bombay whom we have employed and I believe he is English by birth.

Q. I see that you are proposing to show films of a literary nature dealing with education and so on, and you quote a certain number of your films. Have you seen any of the Indian produced films?

A. I have seen a few. We intend to go in for them, and as I said, the five pictures which I am told are among the leading Indian productions have been on definite order for six months, but we have been unable to get copies of them.

Q. The educational officer for visual instruction told us this morning that he could not get films on loan from you, and I understand there is a good deal of expense to produce them. What is the cost of printing a spare copy? I believe you said that it costs you 8 annas a foot?

A. We are prepared to loan films on occasions and to sell copies and up to the present time we have laid down this figure of 8 annas because all we take into account is the actual cost of production of the film

exclusive of overhead charges. That is to say we take into account the writing of the titles, they are about five or six rupees each according to length, and we take into account the negative. I think, in connexion with the question you are asking now, it costs us 2 annas a foot for the raw film, 1 anna 6 pies a foot for printing, 6 pies for joining and I should say another 6 pies for title writing. I should say 5 annas would be the cost of making an additional print but I would not like to give that as the definite cost.

Q. But if anybody asks you, you are charging 8 annas.

A. And actually, if you do take in all costs, the cost would be much more in the neighbourhood of Re. 1-8. You know that the films producing concerns here ask anything from Rs. 2-8 to Rs. 4 a foot for producing films.

Q. But still as regards additional cost, you have got to spend that money for your own work. The additional expenditure would only be for printing a spare copy.

A. A certain amount of time would be lost too. It needs a man to make and edit the copy. Time is used in that way and current also. I should think if the point were pressed, we should be able to make these copies somewhere at about five or six annas. But that would have to apply only to government concerns, because, after all, we have all our expenditure to face and we have our own budgets.

Q. In your experience of mofussil towns, what opportunity do you think there is for the market of the ordinary cinema to expand in the mofussil. Your audiences are free of course?

A. Yes, entirely. Do you mean to build cinemas?

Q. Possibly a travelling cinema. But payment for watching entertainments. To-day the market is limited. The market of Indian produced films is limited to 350 cinemas. If there are audiences in the mofussil prepared to pay, you are going to get a tremendous expansion of your market and a tremendous boost of your industry.

A. Of course I have nothing definite to go upon but judging by the size of audiences that we get up country I should think that it is highly probable that there is a considerable market that would be prepared to pay.

Q. Yes, that is an interesting point. I notice you have 4,000 to 5,000 people. It does look as if there was a market there.

A. In connection with that, it is interesting to note that, when the show has been advertised, the people are quite prepared to spend money to come in by train from either side to see it.

Q. Well, now, you have talked of your films abroad. You have not tried to hire any of your films abroad?

A. No. We are trying now to persuade Pathe and Gaumont to buy rights.

Q. Are they biting?

A. I have not actually got a reply but from conversations I have had here with people who are concerned with this business it seems likely that they will buy. There is a market for every good film.

Q. You give it as your opinion but you have no evidence to substantiate it.

A. I was thinking of the type of films that we produced. The majority of them are educational and the educational film has not got the same market as a well-produced film of general interest.

Q. A good deal of it is scenic.

A. Yes, that one made for American consumption is scenic. But amongst our wheat production, cotton production, sugar production, there are only just little extracts that Pathe will take out and turn into a small topical reel.

**Q.** You obviously think there are a good number of western films that are objectionable because you alluded to certain unobjectionable films that you have used. What are the major factors that you consider objectionable in western films?

**A.** You have to deal with the individual film. There are some that are entirely unobjectionable.

**Q.** You don't think there are certain outstanding features.

**A.** I think it is a question of morality more than anything else.

**Q.** I put it to you—what about these cabaret shows that are constantly appearing in films?

**A.** I think there are certain parts of them which it would be very desirable to exclude.

**Q.** And a good many films of the underworld in Paris and New York,—quite a lot of them. Would you suggest that these might be very largely excluded?

**A.** They certainly might be censored. You can show quite a lot of cabaret life without showing anything unpleasant. But I think the general trend is to put in as much of the unpleasant part as the censor will pass and so to overemphasise that side. I do not think it is a question of European opinion. It is Indian opinion too, because I have had the same remarks made to me by Indians.

*Chairman:* Some of the bed-room scenes are quite unnecessary.

*Col. Crawford:* Mr. Neogy tried to get you to suggest that you should exclude certain types of films. Would you suggest that certain films should only be shown in certain theatres? That the licensees of all films from the west which might be shown in the cinemas in the Fort here where the audience is generally largely European, should not be licensed to show them in cinemas outside the town? It is not a question of excluding anybody from attending a particular cinema if they want to.

**A.** I do not think that would meet the case. I am personally in favour of a censorship which would actually cut out the undesirable part of the film so that it may be suitable for both western and eastern.

**Q.** One other question—as to the possible criminal suggestion of certain films. As a railway officer are you aware of a holdup of a train near Peshawar in, I think, 1913 which was reported to have been due to a film shown in Peshawar just previously? The Pathans copied the methods shown in the holding up of the railway.

**A.** I am not aware of this.

*Mr. Green:* In your instructional films you actually have plots?

**A.** By our instructional films do you mean the rural uplift film? In that there is a definite plot. The scenario is written with a definite scheme. But if you take the cattle improvement and other films, there you cannot call it a plot; at the same time you see the results of proper methods and wrong methods. Both are shown clearly. There is a plan.

*Chairman:* I have seen quite a lot of that. For instance, a boy sought the hand of a girl, the father made a condition that the potatoes should be fatter, and the boy struggled for it and made the potatoes actually fatter and won the bride.

**A.** We have not done that. We have shown the effect of using manure and various fertilisers and improved agricultural implements and how to increase outturn and save labour.

*Mr. Green:* What kind of film do you find is most appreciated?

**A.** The serio-comic. "The Thief of Baghdad" has been immensely popular. We have had it on the lines three times and it will still draw enormous audiences. Then there are "The Gold Rush", "The Lost World", and "Safety Last" (Harold Lloyd's). They are very popular indeed.

**Q.** And exhibited to the purely agricultural classes?

A. They are just as amused. Tremendous appreciation is exhibited.

Q. May I ask you one or two questions about the present censorship and what is proposed? You cannot think of any definite films to which you have taken objection.

A. I was wondering just now whether I could recollect a title. I don't think I can.

Q. I take it you agree that in every censorship there must be certain questions of taste?

A. And a lot depends on the individual. But I think there are certain canons of propriety.

Q. You are aware that the Bombay Board have laid down instructions which do contain canons of propriety for their inspectors and that they have communicated them to the trade also.

A. As a matter of fact, I was not aware of that, nor was I aware that the inspection of these films was left in the hands of the inspectors.

Q. The primary examination of the film is done by the paid officials of the Board, the inspector or secretary. If he finds anything of which he is in the slightest degree doubtful he reports fully to the Board which, if they think it necessary, appoint a sub-committee or leave the whole Board to see it, and then decide whether the film can be licensed or whether it should be refused license altogether or whether it should be given a license after certain excisions.

A. I have not of course had any dealings with it but I think it is wrong that it should be in the hands of a subordinate at all.

Q. Your idea is that there should be a Board of which some members actually see every film.

A. Yes.

Q. Should that be a stipendiary board?

A. I think it would require some form of remuneration.

Q. In Bombay I think the amount of films censored is about three hours' work a day merely for inspecting the films for licenses.

A. Then in these circumstances it would be necessary to have paid officers for it.

Q. In England the system is, they obtain a certain number. I think actually 4 gentlemen of mature age and independent means who for what is called part-time remuneration give whole-time services. They are gentlemen of culture and of leisure who welcome a substantial addition of £800 or £1,000 per annum to their existing resources. They have to work from 10 to 5-30. Do you think it would be practicable to get a similar class of gentlemen to serve in this country, especially taking into account that you want members representing different communities.

A. Yes, I should say that it would be.

Q. Do you think you would get Europeans?

A. Yes, I think you would get both. You are speaking now of three hours work a day.

Q. It would probably increase very considerably.

A. Yes. Then you would be able to have more than two persons on the Board. Speaking for instance of one community, we will say Europeans for the moment, it would be possible to have 2 or 3 or 4 serving on a panel.

Q. Would not you rather be apt to lose in continuity? You were saying earlier that a Board of Censors should have the advantage of previous experience.

A. Yes, but if you have a very large amount of films passing through, they would all become experienced in a very short time, on the basis of three hours work a day, if you had a panel of four only.

Q. You are in favour of a Central Board?

A. Yes. Of course, I am referring to three hours work a day, for the work done in Bombay alone at present. If you add in Calcutta the work would occupy 8 hours a day.

Q. You would require a stronger panel. I do not know what form of remuneration you would propose but it might be possible to find whole-time officials for this, actually salaried officers. If that amount of work is involved it would possibly be preferable to do this.

A. Yes. I was speaking on the basis of 3 hours a day, but if it is going to amount to full-time work, it would be preferable; I think it is a charge which the film industry can bear quite easily.

Q. Well, the present Board is just paying their way. It would probably mean increased funds. On the other hand, if the industry expands we would probably get more fees. But if we had men doing 3 hours a day, do you think the class of gentlemen we require, both European and Indian, say men of real culture, men of knowledge of the world and experience, would be willing to work unless they were fairly remunerated, day in and day out throughout the year, without the opportunity of spending the hot weather in a hill station and undertaking other responsibilities.

A. I am afraid it is not a question that I have had much time to study. It is rather difficult to give an answer at random.

Q. If the volume of work were greater, you would prefer a whole-time board.

A. Yes. Otherwise I see no reason why there should not be a panel. And is censorship after all impossible in a hill station?

Q. Mustn't there be one permanent body of censors?

A. I should think if the permanent body were located fairly close to a hill station there should be no difficulty.

Q. Take Burma. How is the Burma importer or producer to do that in the matter of topical films which have to be exhibited very quickly and up to date.

A. It would probably make a difference of two or three days. I mean assuming that the film has to go to Bombay originally and a copy to go to Burma after censorship in Bombay, it would merely mean the difference between Bombay sending it to the hill station and getting it back again. We will assume Mahabaleshwar. I should think infinitely more time than this is lost in the docks and customs.

Q. It is not a question of imported films but locally produced films.

A. I was thinking of the imported films when I made that remark.

**Letter from Mr. A. E. TYLDEN-PATTENSON, Chief Publicity Officer, Railway Department (Railway Board), Bombay, dated the 8th December 1927.**

With reference to the questions put and the answers given on the subject of the price charged by the Central Bureau for positive copies of negatives produced under our aegis, I beg to inform you I have issued orders that with immediate effect such copies will be made and sold to any Government or quasi-Government departments requiring them at a rate of 5 annas per foot instead of 8 annas as hitherto. I am notifying all Government departments forthwith.

**Oral Evidence of the Bombay Board of Film Censors headed by Mr. D. HEALY, Commissioner of Police, on Wednesday, the 9th November 1927.**

The following Members of the Board were present:—

Mr. D. Healy, Commissioner of Police, <i>President</i> .	
Mr. N. V. Mandlik,	} Members of the Board.
Mr. S. K. Barodawalla,	
Mr. Byramjee Jeejeebhoy,	
Mr. H. Hamill,	
Mr. C. R. Watkins,	
Mr. S. G. Panandikar, <i>Secretary</i> .	
Inspector of the Board.	

*(The answers where no name is indicated were given by the President of the Board, Mr. Healy.)*

**Chairman:** Mr. Healy and Gentlemen, we are very glad to meet you. You are perhaps aware that the Committee owes its origin more or less to the criticisms on censorship and I dare say that you are familiar with those criticisms. We want to have your assistance very much on that aspect of the question. I suppose you would like to give your views on other portions of the questionnaire also if any of you choose to give your opinions. May I take it, Mr. Healy, that you will be answering for the Board and if any other member wishes to add anything he can do so?

**A.** Yes, anything they would like to. They have been longer on the Board than I have and there may be points which they might like to supplement. In regard to the first portion we are not in a position to give an opinion, unless there is any particular part of it that you think the Board might express itself on.

**Q.** If any of us wish to have your opinion on it we will come back to it. But we shall go on with the main question, namely, the second part, that is the social aspects and control. I may begin by asking you whether you remember the Social Hygiene Delegation visiting this country?

**A.** What number is it?

**Q.** It is not there. I want to know whether they met the Board or any member of the Board at all.

**Mr. Green:** Mrs. Neville Rolfe and Dr. David Lees.

**Mr. Hamill:** They did not.

**Q.** Did they get into touch with this Board at all?

**Mr. Hamill:** No.

**Q.** I do not know if you have read the report which was published?

**Mr. Hamill:** I saw a statement by Mrs. Neville Rolfe in the press.

**Q.** And they seem to think—perhaps I had better read to you what they say because we want your opinion very much on that point. This is what they say: "In every province and state visited by the Delegation the evil influence of the cinema was cited by educationists and the representative citizens as one of the major factors in lowering the standard of sex conduct, and thereby tending to increase the dissemination of disease. The suggestive influence of the cinemas on the adolescent has been experienced in all countries, and its dangers are recognised. As a channel for healthy recreation and popular enlightenment, particularly in a largely illiterate community, it may be of immense value, but can equally serve to stimulate crime and sensuality. The commercial interests involved in the film industry are great. Films are produced in large numbers in America, each film representing a large investment of capital. Educationists and others in Europe and America are making de-



terminated efforts to check the circulation of the suggestive film; openings are therefore sought for them where public opinion is uninstructed or unorganised. While in India, the Delegation found films which, owing to their generally suggestive nature, had been rejected by large cities in England, but were or had recently been in circulation in India and Burma . . ."

A. Does that mention the names of any of these films?

Q. No. I should like to know with reference to that statement, whether you had any such complaint at any time that films which had been rejected by large cities in England were or had recently been in circulation in India and Burma?

A. I have heard of no such film, and it would certainly have been brought to our notice if any such film had been in circulation.

Q. May I ask in that connection, when you get an application to register a film, whether you get any information a film, if it is a foreign film, has been passed by the country of origin?

A. The Inspector can tell us that. (After consulting the Inspector). He says that we do not get any information on that point.

Q. You have no means of ascertaining beforehand when a film is submitted for registration whether it has been passed by the country of origin?

A. No. I could tell whether it had been passed by the British Board of Film Censors.

Q. If it had been passed?

A. Yes, by the British Board, but we have no check on American films as to whether they had been passed or not by the country of origin.

Mr. Green: Is it not a fact that the Board gets considerable information from trade journals on this subject—I do not mean to say, about every film?

A. I have not seen any of those trade journals.

Mr. Green: Does not the Secretary get a copy of these trade journals?

Secretary of the Board: Privately I subscribe to these trade journals and I keep myself in touch with them. In all the American films they have printed on them "Passed by the National Board of Review."

Chairman: Do you make it a point to enquire whether it has been passed or not?

Secretary of the Board: No.

Q. Do you think it would be useful to call for such information in the application form to say whether the thing has been passed by the country of origin or not? Do you think there is any practical difficulty in that?

Secretary of the Board: I have made a study of the conditions of censorship in America and my opinion is that the conditions there are much more lax than in India.

Q. That might be, but it does not answer my point. Is there any practical difficulty in insisting on the applicant stating in his application whether it had been passed by the country of origin?

Secretary of the Board: In many cases the importer would not be able to give the information.

Q. They should get it. What is the difficulty in getting it. When they import films they should also get that information. What is the difficulty in getting that?

A. I think it will be very desirable.

Q. You do not think there is any practical objection?

A. I do not think so.

Mr. Hamill: It does not follow that because a film has been passed for exhibition in a foreign country, it is suitable for exhibition here.

Q. With reference to the objection taken here by the Delegation it may be one means . . .

*Mr. Hamill* : After all, the Delegation was here for only two months or so and how they came to these sweeping conclusions I do not really see.

*Q.* Still we will have to pay due respect to such an important Delegation.

*Mr. Watkins* : May I say that the inclusion of that information is not likely to be of much use, because if the application had not got the information he would probably tell a lie. The only advantage would be that we might be able to convict him of telling a lie. As we have had no definite complaints so far, therefore no case of telling a lie would have come to light so far.

*Q.* I presume the trade is honest. They continue : " Films depicting stories of crime and immorality in European and American settings have an evil influence on the youth of those countries; the influence is far more pernicious when the ordinary habits of life, the traditions and social customs of the West are interpreted in the light of the traditions and social customs of the East." I have seen your rules and your instructions to your Inspector. I take it that you have due regard to the differences in the ordinary habits of life, the traditions and social customs of India in censoring films?

*A.* Undoubtedly.

*Q.* I mean you have not ignored that?

*A.* No. We always bear that in mind.

*Q.* " Publicity material, handbills and posters used in connection with films are in many cases more indecent and suggestive than the films."

*A.* I am certainly in favour of having the posters censored before being exhibited.

*Q.* But have you come across such handbills and posters yourself?

*A.* I saw one poster the other day which I think was objectionable and I very nearly, as Commissioner of Police, ordered it to be taken down. But I did not see it until Thursday, the day before it would have been removed. It was in connection with one of the sex films and it was certainly objectionable. I did not see it soon enough and if that had gone through the censor's hands it would certainly not have been passed for exhibition.

*Q.* You consider it would be useful to have a censorship of the publicity material connected with films.

*A.* Yes. I should say all that should be censored.

*Q.* How far would you extend that to newspaper advertisements?

*A.* The newspaper editors exercise a certain amount of censorship about what appears in the press. I do not think I would go as far as that.

*Q.* You would not include newspaper advertisement in that sphere?

*A.* I do not think so. I do not think it necessary.

*Q.* What about cinema magazines?

*A.* I have no experience of cinema magazines.

*Q.* They come in large numbers for trade purposes.

*Mr. Hamill* : And for the general public.

*Q.* They contain lots of very attractive pictures?

*A.* That is not at all as bad as having a poster on the board which everybody would see.

*Q.* I want to know the extent—I want to analyse the difficulties, not that I am opposed to it, I want to examine the position critically. When you say that it would be advisable to undertake the censoring of posters and publicity material you would confine it only to posters which are hung.

*A.* I think I would be satisfied with the censorship of posters only.

*Q.* And what about handbills? I do not know how many people get the synopsis.

*A.* I think it would be desirable to have the synopsis censored. That would not mean very much extra work.

*Q.* In giving that answer you have paid due regard to the amount of work which it would involve?

A. Yes, we must consider that. I think the Secretary without much extra work could do that.

Mr. Green: The synopsis already has got to be produced before any film is censored?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you got any power as Commissioner of Police over these posters and handbills?

A. Yes.

Q. Under the Town Police Act?

A. Under the City Police Act; anything likely to offend public morality . . .

Q. I suppose you do not want to. . . .

A. But it would be much better to censor these things beforehand.

Q. Of course, most of these posters are imported from abroad in connection with foreign films?

A. I do not know.

Mr. S. K. Barodawalla: Some are printed here when they translate it into Guzerati and circulate it here.

Q. For every foreign film imported the advertisement matter is sent along with it to the trader?

A. Yes.

Q. How will you obviate the objection as to the delay that would be entailed?

A. There would not be any delay at all. In the first place, the film has got to be inspected by the Inspector, and afterwards I have got to certify it in case it is unobjectionable, so that there is plenty of time to exercise the necessary censorship over the posters and synopsis.

Q. You would confine it to posters and the handbills?

A. Yes, I would be quite satisfied with that much.

Q. To proceed with the report. "A large proportion of young people form the audiences and illustrated handbills are distributed largely in schools and colleges." Is that your experience?

Mr. Hamill: I know, Sir, that I have never yet come across an instance of posters or handbills of cinema films being distributed in any college in Bombay.

Q. "It is desirable that all publicity material used should be viewed and certified by the censor in connection with the film, and that the issue of uncertified material should be a punishable offence." They say further, "The Delegation are aware that they have the most thoughtful of Indian opinion with them in urging the Provincial Governments to take immediate and drastic measures to check this serious menace to the character and standards of the youth of India. Legal powers were transferred to the Provincial Governments in 1920. In Bombay two Censors have been appointed, but no representatives of the Departments of Education and Public Health advise the Censors, and there is no definition of the word 'suitable' which governs the administration of the Act." I see on your Board you have an experienced educational officer?

A. We always had one.

Secretary of the Board: I am the Secretary of the Board. I am also a member of the Imperial Educational Service and I am Professor of Economics in the Elphinstone College.

Q. You have got on the Board a representative of the colleges . . . .

A. We have the Principal of the Elphinstone College.

Q. "The tendency of censorship administration in each Province is to omit certain blatantly indecent scenes, but not to question the general 'suitability' of the ordinary dramatic film for circulation in India." Is that a correct statement in your experience?

A. No.

Q. "We would submit that general suggestiveness of a most undesirable kind may pervade a whole film without any one scene being within the meaning of the term 'obscenity' if western standards are used for films in western settings, although in the atmosphere of the different social customs of the East the whole film appears obscene and is suggestive of gross moral laxity to an Indian audience." From your experience of the people of this country do you think . . .

A. That is the most preposterous statement that has been made in the report.

Q. You do not agree with that statement?

A. No.

Q. "The present laxity of the censorship in India attracts those films recognised as undesirable, and a larger proportion of the undesirable appear to be in circulation than in Great Britain." It is said here that firm measures should be taken to exclude the films unsuitable to India. Do you think it is possible to make such a definition as may be applicable to England and not applicable to India?

A. Well it is a very difficult matter. For instance, you get films representing western life. I have often seen such films which I am sorry to see exhibited in India but I don't see how, as a Censorship Board, we shall be justified in refusing certification. In fact I should not like to see the same films exhibited in England. I mean some of those sex films which are very undesirable though there is nothing obscene about them. I am probably correct in saying the uneducated classes do not follow the plot. At the same time they see what is going on. I cannot say that they produce any undesirable effect on them; particularly in the case of Hindus I do not think it has any effect whatever; but it must in the case of Muhammadans who are not accustomed to seeing women outside the purdah. I am talking now of course of the uneducated classes, not of the educated classes, and I say that they derive a considerable amount of sensual pleasure from witnessing these sex films which come from abroad; but how far that is undesirable I cannot say definitely.

Q. I was told, though I don't know if there is any truth in the observation, that they spread knowledge.

A. It undoubtedly lowers our prestige. For instance when I was up in Sind, which is a very backward province and mainly a Muhammadan province, the exhibition of such films in Sind has undoubtedly had a bad effect. It must lower the prestige of the Englishman, as they look on all those characters as English people and it undoubtedly lowers the prestige of the white man and the white woman in Sind. I am only talking of this Presidency. I don't know enough of the Punjab. But at the same time I do not consider that Hindus are affected in the same manner.

Q. I suppose that as they get familiar with these things more and more, in the long run these effects are likely to disappear.

A. In the cities for instance I do not believe they do any harm; but I am absolutely certain that they do lower our prestige in the mofussil—especially in the backward parts.

Q. I suppose some of your remarks would apply to some scenes on the stage?

A. I do not think so. I think that is quite different. People know that that is acting on the stage.

Q. And do you suggest any solution for that? Do you think it is a thing which needs to be cured or would you leave it to time to cure it?

A. Well, for instance in Sind I should require a quite different standard of censorship. I should require much stricter censorship in Sind.

Q. Now we have been told that Indian films are getting more and more popular with the Indian public and that if there is a larger output of Indian films that would be a solution of the difficulty, because there would be no room for Western films.

A. The point is the Indian films I have seen depict the lower life of the people rather than the higher life, and they are so inferior in technique at present that you won't get any crowd of the backward or uneducated classes to see them, and an educated Indian would not throw away his money on them.

Q. We are now concerned with the uneducated classes.

A. Yes they go to the Indian film in preference to the Western film.

Q. And if you popularise them in those tracts to which you refer, you feel that would be a solution of the difficulty perhaps?

A. Yes if it is considered worthwhile. But the films I have seen would not do any good. In fact I should prefer them not to see any films rather than see a good many of the Indian films.

Q. Of course I mean if they are improved in technique and more attention is paid to other sides.

A. Yes that is very necessary.

Q. And you can divert the taste of the people in that way. Do they show these Western films in those parts for want of Indian films? In the city itself we have heard there are theatres which are exclusively running Indian pictures.

A. Yes, there are 7 theatres in Bombay which show only Indian pictures.

Q. And they are popular with crowded houses, much more so than I thought.

A. That I am not able to say.

Q. So you advocate stricter censorship for such parts?

A. Yes, for the backward parts.

Q. That is to say your certificate should not be of general application but should be subject to local certification in addition.

A. Well, that is a difficult point and might be considered when the question of the General Board is being discussed.

Q. I was led to it because of the difficulty you felt?

A. I have written a note on the question of the General Board and the Provincial Board.

Q. Well perhaps we might come back to that. But do you think the suggestion for making a different class unsuitable to India a feasible proposition, making a different classification or rule unsuitable to India?

A. I don't think it would be practicable.

Q. It is said here "The decision as to what is suitable for India as a whole could be defined and the definition applied on uniform lines with the minimum of financial outlay if the responsibility were assumed by the Government of India." That is another question; but we should like to have your opinion as experienced gentlemen dealing with censorship whether there can be a suitable definition of "unsuitable for India"?

A. I do not think it is possible. The Board is absolutely unanimous about that.

Q. I may say it is not only the general complaint by the Delegation but there is a sort of general belief even among responsible citizens in Bombay. I am not at present at liberty to disclose the identity of the gentleman but a very responsible gentleman, I can assure you, in the city of Bombay says in a letter to me—this is what he says although he has not visited the cinema more than once a year:—"From what little I have seen of the cinema industry I can say that in most cases it is put to a very bad use and has taught Indians a number of vices with all the attractiveness of the cinema. New forms of immorality and burglary have come into existence which the Indian mind could not have conceived without difficulty."

A. Is he an Indian gentleman?

Q. Yes, he is an Indian.

A. And he has been only once or twice to the cinema?

**Q.** Still I want to see how far you share in that view. You are all responsible citizens of Bombay, and I may say that I too had a vague notion in my mind, I may make a confession, when I entered on these duties that films are responsible for some things which exist in India.

**A.** But is it not a question which could better be answered by a study of police-court records. A vague expression of opinion is not worthy of much notice.

**Q.** I do not blame the Delegation because they have gathered some impressions from such talks, but what gives rise to such impressions? That is the point.

**Mr. Mandlik :** Probably as he has been only once or twice to the cinema he may have on those occasions come across some crime scenes and that helped him to form his opinion of the cinemas as a whole.

**Mr. Hamill :** I should like to suggest that that opinion by the Delegation was offered by specialists on a subject called "Sex Hygiene." You might as well infer from an advertisement of a Kidney Cure that every affection to which one is liable is an affection of the kidneys, as that evil sex reactions are to be found everywhere a Sex Expert finds them.

**Q.** You do not consider that would be a correct conclusion to draw.

**A.** For instance one of the questions in the questionnaire asks "Do you consider there has been any increase in crime in your province due to the cinema?" Well that presupposes an increase of crime whereas there has been a reduction of crime.

**Mr. Green :** Throughout the Presidency?

**A.** I am talking of Bombay city.

**Mr. Neogy :** Has there been any increase in the detective ability of the police owing to the cinemas? (Laughter).

**Mr. Healy :** For instance from month to month we get cases of stabbing with knives and penknives. Lots of people, some of whom have never been to the cinema, put that down to what they have seen in cinemas but I don't think you can say definitely that it is due to the cinema. We had a case last week of two beggars scrambling for some pie which had been distributed by a charitably disposed man, and in the heat of the struggle one beggar stabbed the other. Well, I do not suppose that beggar had ever been to the cinema. And if you examine each case I do not think that you could put it down that you could make the cinema responsible for it. One crime occurred not very long ago in which the robbers wore black hoods over their heads. Well, that very week there was a film showing in Bombay in which highway robbers wore black masks with just holes for the eyes, the nose and the mouth. Well, these particular criminals in Bombay adopted that form of disguise in committing an offence that week; but there has been no other similar case since.

**Q.** And dacoits appearing in masks are not unknown in this country. I remember as a boy in my own village there was a dacoity when they appeared with masks.

**A.** Of course it is the customary thing to cover your face to a certain extent when you are committing dacoity to prevent identification.

**Col. Crawford :** You have no definite knowledge that the methods employed by well known criminals have become more efficient possibly through the cinema. There is no evidence of that fact?

**A.** I am certain there is no change in the methods of burglars owing to what they have seen at the cinema. We are very strict in our censorship about excising any scene showing a particular form of committing a crime such as breaking a safe by any particular means.

**Q.** I saw a film in Simla where a girl was being driven in a taxi, the taxi-driver stopped and robbed her money. The whole thing was shown, though it was quite unnecessary to the picture. It must have slipped through the censors. Of course that is a method of robbery employed in Calcutta for some time.

A. Here recently we have had a series of motor car dacoities. Fortunately we got on to the gang after a time. I do not think motor car dacoities are due to the cinema. It is a question of the dacoits using their common sense.

Chairman : It is of course also due to the advent of the motor car.

A. But there is certainly no improvement in the methods of the criminals in Bombay.

Col. Crawford : You do however act as a Censor in regard to all these methods of crime.

A. Yes, we are very particular about anything relating to crime.

Chairman : I notice in the list of excisions you have omitted even chloroform scenes.

A. Yes we object to anything like that.

Q. I rather thought that was being too strict. After all chloroform is well known. Therefore you don't think there is any real substance such as requires consideration in these general impressions.

A. No I certainly do not think so because the best criterion of a Censor's work is the absence of criticism either in the press or by letters to the Board in India.

Q. Still there has been a certain amount of criticism on which the authorities have acted surely? The whole origin of this committee is due to agitation that there was a certain amount of misrepresentation of Western life so serious as to lower the prestige of the Westerner in the East.

A. Well, that is undoubtedly true. I do not say it is deliberate misrepresentation.

Q. I wish to probe that matter a little further. Is there misrepresentation of the Westerner in the East?

A. Yes. For instance I consider that all those dramas containing scenes of faithless wives and amorous husbands all scenes of that nature undoubtedly affect our prestige in this country.

Q. But I mean is it misrepresentation in the West? Supposing it was thrown on the screen in England, would it be a misrepresentation in England?

A. Certainly.

Q. It is as much misrepresentation in the West as it is in the East.

A. Except that there is a higher standard of general education in the West and it has not the same effect there.

Q. If that is your feeling in the matter then it requires some remedy, does it not?

A. Yes, if Government take it as their policy that we should be more particular about the white man's prestige in this country, I should certainly require a stricter censorship.

Q. Indian opinion would not tolerate it if put in that light. Those days are passed. We must put it on higher ground.

A. Well that is where the difficulty has come in.

Q. Familiarity breeds friendship and at the same time breeds contempt.

A. We have no objection to the educated classes seeing these films.

Q. If I may pursue the matter how are you going to educate the uneducated?

A. It will probably take a century.

Q. I mean these uneducated Indians draw just as wrong an inference from seeing the dresses of ladies displayed on the Queen's Road or at Juhu. From both I suppose the uneducated Indian takes an equally wrong impression of Western life?

A. I do not think that is a misrepresentation.

Q. I mean in his own mind, social customs being different, he draws a wrong impression of people living here. You and I know the life they are living but the uneducated man thinks there is something abnormal about it.

A. Well, I don't think that does much harm.

Q. Then what do you think does much harm on the screen?

A. The fact that the lower life of the country is depicted, not the higher life, in these sex films.

Q. You mean what Colonel Crawford called Cabaret scenes and the underworld?

A. Yes, most of these films contain scenes from cabarets, drinking saloons, etc.

Q. Therefore the proper remedy for that would be stricter censorship. But how will it affect the trade?

A. It will affect the trade seriously.

Q. And might kill the industry.

A. Well if it killed that class of film, we should have no objection.

Q. Will it affect the business aspect of the trade?

A. I am afraid it would.

Q. That has to be kept in view. After all people go to these shows for amusement; amusement is their first concern. I mean I want you to have in mind all these aspects. For that is what is troubling us and we should like to have your opinion and assistance.

A. It is owing to the fact that we have borne these facts in mind that we have not refused certification in many cases.

Q. I mean that is one of the questions we have to consider. If the stricter censorship advocated by the Delegation were adopted there is a certain risk of killing the trade.

A. That is what I have always considered myself when I have felt inclined to reject a film and some very good films too.

Q. And the industry is mostly in the hands of Indians?

A. Yes.

Q. And they are generally a nervous people in the matter of business, more nervous than the clear-headed Scotchman.

A. I don't know. I think we have some men in Bombay who could beat any Scotchman.

Q. In Bombay, but in other parts of India we are very nervous, and if you throw cold water like this it may have a very serious effect on the trade itself.

A. I don't think that would do much harm, except to the business man, from the national point of view.

Q. I do not mean from the national point of view; but you think it will improve?

A. I think so, if we had a stricter censorship and rejected those films.

Q. It would affect the industry?

A. Undoubtedly.

Q. And do you think, apart from the lowering of the prestige of the Westerner in the East, do you think the injury produced on the people of the country demands such a remedy.

A. No, I could not say that.

Q. So looked at from the point of view of the people of the country a stricter censorship will have the certain risk of affecting the trade. The only advantage in your opinion would be this fear of lowering the prestige of the Westerner in the East.

A. That is the main argument. As was mentioned in that letter, the gentleman considered that class of film as lowering the morals of the people.



**Q.** I wanted to know whether that impression was correct and you all agreed that it was not. Because if that was correct it would require serious notice.

**A.** But many prominent gentlemen consider that the morals of the people are being affected.

**Q.** That was my own feeling; it may be a wrong feeling but I started with that in my mind. I know one or two cases but that is hardly adequate in dealing with a vast subject like this.

**A.** No, because the Board of Censors allows that class of films to be exhibited in England.

**Q.** That is true.

**Mr. Mandlik :** The only solution of the question lies in a better understanding between the two peoples.

**Q.** The remedy is education?

**Mr. Mandlik :** You cannot stop them because the trade is bound to suffer. If you keep back certain films they will surely come to know. Then they will say it is all window-dressing and they will learn the truth from other sources. Therefore it is much better to take the risk. I admit these films have a certain ill effect in the mofussil. I have learnt as much from my friends. The effect on certain frontier tribes and how to stop it is a question for higher authority.

**Q.** Now we are all interested in that, Mr. Mandlik, and if the effect is so serious we must all see that it is stopped.

**Mr. Mandlik :** There is no question that certain drastic changes are taking place in Indian society. You cannot stop that. It is bound to come.

**Col. Crawford :** Do you think producers for commercial reasons are entitled to exploit, as they undoubtedly do, the public by overemphasising the lower life of the world?

**A.** No. Every care is taken to stop that kind of exhibition.

**Q.** There is still a good deal. Don't you consider that in films in India there is a good deal of the lower side of life emphasised.

**A.** Because that appeals to the audience. It is the duty of the Censor to stop it.

**Q.** If you increase your rigidity in regard to this type of films would not the producer begin to produce something else?

**A.** It depends on the definition of the word "rigidity". If you are too rigid and make the film insipid it will be just like a dinner without spice. If the question to be considered is that whatever the result the films must be absolutely pure, that is a different question; but we do take all reasonable care.

**Q.** Do you think that a larger proportion of films which over-emphasise the rotten side of life are shown in India than in England?

**A.** I don't think I could say that. I don't quite sufficiently visit the theatres either here or in England.

**Q.** Could you get a list of the films that are passed by the British Film Censors? My own impression is that a lot of stuff is unloaded on India that would not find an audience in England?

**Mr. Hamill :** I think that as long as the film industry runs it is bound to deal frequently with the lower side of life. The criminal is the side of life from which most plots must be derived, and if you eliminate crime entirely from the film industry, you won't get your plot.

**Chairman :** In any part of the world?

**Mr. Hamill :** If you are going to create an Indian film industry which would draw an audience, you will have to have a spice of crime and a spice of excitement in it.

**Mr. Mandlik :** The films you mention are not very common in Bombay.

**Q.** How could they go to the mofussil without going through Bombay?

**Mr. Mendlik :** I am only speaking of our Board in Bombay. They may have certificates from other Boards.

**Q.** A very large percentage of the films exhibited in the country go through Bombay?

**Mr. Hamill :** I think there are a lot of films unloaded in this country that are out of date in Europe, but they are not objectionable films from the point of view that we are discussing now. They are old comic films which do not attract an English audience, but they are perfectly healthy and unobjectionable. They are of course so boring that no sensible person would like to look at them.

**Q.** But still such films amuse the people?

**A.** They may get an audience on the first night, but not afterwards.

**Q.** From your experience can you tell us the years in which the films were passed by your Board and the country of their origin?

**Mr. Healey :** I have got a statement showing the different Indian and foreign films. The total number of films certified was 897 of which 105 were Indian films. That was in 1926.

**Q.** How many of them were of foreign origin, that is to say, of British or American origin?

**A.** I will get that statement.

**Q.** We should like to have a statement of the films which you thought were wholly objectionable and their country of origin?

**A.** Yes, we could let you have one.

**Q.** You have heard the proposal very strongly urged that the censorship should be done by Members of the Board rather than by the Secretary of the Board in the first instance?

**A.** I have got a Note on that question.

**Q.** Do all your colleagues agree on that point?

**A.** Yes. It would be impossible in Bombay to get gentlemen of sufficient experience and education who would have the time to give to the inspection and censoring of films. We considered the question carefully and that is our conclusion.

**Q.** Apart from that difficulty, I suppose it would be an advantage to have censoring done by at least two members of the Board?

**A.** Of course, if you could afford it, and if you could get suitable persons.

**Q.** Assuming that the men were available, it would certainly be an improvement on the present system?

**A.** Yes, but two or three members would not be enough.

**Q.** Suppose you have a panel of members from whom you draw these members from time to time according to some roster?

**A.** I have got a Note on the question of the Central Board. I think that if you could get suitable men and if you have money, it would be all right. But we could not pay their fees from our receipts and we should have to get a subsidy from the Government.

**Q.** Of course, if a larger number of films have to be dealt with, you will certainly require more members.

**A.** There has not been a steady increase. In 1921 the total number of films was 812; in 1926 it was 897; in 1925-26 it was 667, and up to 31st October this year we had 733. The same is the case with regard to Indian films. The number of Indian films in 1921 was 64, but it went up to 105 in 1926. The number went up very slowly. In 1921, it went up to 64, in 1922, it went up to 51, in 1923, it went up to 56, in 1924, it went up to 61, in 1925, it went up to 90, in 1926, it went up to 105, and this year up to 31st October it was 81, and this figure may probably go up to 95 by the end of the year. That is not a great advance in the number of films. Of course, the number of theatres has increased considerably.

**Q.** How do they manage then without a corresponding increase in the number of films?

*Mr. Green:* These are the Bombay figures only. There are other Boards in other places of import.

*Mr. Neogy:* While we are considering the question of the work done by the Board of Censors, the footage will, I think, be a better guide than the number of films imported.

*Secretary of Censor Board:* The best indication would be the income of the cinemas; there has been an increase in the fee income.

*Mr. Mandlik:* From the fee income the footage can be gathered (approximately).

*Mr. Healy:* I have got some figures for the last three years, and they correspond really with the number of films. In 1924-25 you had 26 lakhs feet, in 1925-26 you had 25 lakhs feet, and in 1926-27 you had 35 lakhs feet. We had the largest increase here.

*Chairman:* Do you think it would be practicable to have all films coming into the country censored at one port?

A. Yes.

Q. And advantageous too?

A. That would mean the establishment of a Central Board in Bombay.

Q. The trade may have to say something about it, but do you think it will entail any undue delay in the disposal of the films by the Censors?

*Mr. Barodawalla:* I should think so.

*Mr. Healy:* Rangoon people would object strongly to this owing to the delay that would take place.

Q. It was said, talking of imported films, they are imported in duplicate, and one copy was sent to Rangoon, and after the copy received in Bombay has been passed by the Censors, the importer would merely send a wire to Rangoon to say that the film has been certified?

A. Yes, but they cannot show the film until they get the actual certificate. I think, however, that is a subject which the dealers would be in a better position to discuss.

Q. But, with your experience, do you consider that a Central Board, in addition to Local Boards, to deal with all films would be practicable?

A. I don't think it would be practicable. A Central Board is all right in the abstract.

Q. What are the difficulties?

A. In the abstract uniformity in the standards of censorship is desirable, and a single Board for all India would attain that. On the other hand, the conditions of the different provinces vary and the Government of India have themselves pointed out that films suitable for exhibition in one place may be unsuitable in others, particularly quoting the differences between the large towns like Bombay or Calcutta and the less enlightened country districts. This could be got over by having a Board large enough to represent all parts of the country and the special views of all communities; but that would cost a good deal. On the whole, three or four boards, each knowing the requirements of their own part of the country, will probably give more general satisfaction than one Central Board. The danger of divergent views is not very great. Only about a dozen films certified in Bombay have been deprived of their certificates by other boards in some six years.

To make the Central Advisory Officer the executive authority for the whole of India with an office at a single port at which alone films will be allowed to be imported will increase the cost of films everywhere except within the area ordinarily served by that port. To bring films intended for Rangoon to, say, Bombay, will necessarily increase the cost of transport of those films. If the censorship is also to be enforced on films produced in India, many of them will have to be sent long distances to be examined. For instance, if we had a Central Board in Bombay where most of the Indian films are made, producers in Calcutta would find it inconvenient and ex-

pensive. In this connection it may be noted that only very recently the Government of the Punjab have found it necessary to constitute their own Board of Film Censors to examine films produced locally.

These objections would probably be met by having two or more Deputy Censors at other centres; but I do not see how this would lead to any great improvement on the present system.

I consider that the present system should be continued with any improvements that may be suggested as a result of your inquiry. Our present Board of Censors is as well devised as could be, under reasonable conditions as to cost; each of the chief communities is represented, and a selected official is chairman. One member from each community, apart from the officials, seems to be sufficient. In practice undoubtedly we find that a small Board is better than a large one. One representative from each community is sufficient for our requirements. If a Chief Advisory Officer, with or without deputies, is appointed, he or they should preside over a largely non-official Board. In Bombay we have a police officer, a customs officer and an educational officer on the Board. The first and third seem to be essential. Leaving out of consideration the very valuable work done by Mr. Green, the Customs official, personally, it is doubtful whether a representative of that department as such, is absolutely necessary. A full time paid Inspector (or Secretary doing the Inspector's work) is essential. He need not be a member of the Board, but the Board must have power to delegate such of their duties as they may think fit to him under proper safeguards.

• The censoring authority, unless composed largely of full time workers (and therefore paid), must work partly directly and partly through Inspectors. There is no getting away from the paid Inspectors.

Provincial revenues cannot fairly be called upon to pay for this Board. Unless the Government of India can find funds for the Central Board the cost will have to be defrayed by the Trade. It is therefore desirable to keep the cost as low as possible.

These are the arguments in favour of retaining our present Provincial Boards in preference to the institution of a Central Board. We are unanimously of the opinion that the Provincial Boards would be preferable even to a Central Board, especially in Bombay, and I am personally of the opinion that we must go a little further. With regard to the backward provinces you must have some further censorship in these tracts.

You will have representatives from all the provinces of India, but when they come here they lose touch with the conditions of their own province. We want representatives of several communities in Bombay, and what would prove suitable for Bombay may not prove suitable for more backward parts.

Q. That is from the point of view of unsuitability of the films to the illiterate masses. Are you familiar with the other provinces?

A. I am very familiar with Sind.

Q. Do you think there is much difference between the Madrassi and the Bombayite in the matter of appreciating films?

A. I don't think so.

Q. Or between a Punjabi and a Bombay man?

Mr. Byramji: It all depends upon the atmosphere in which the man is trained.

Q. What I mean is, is not too much emphasis laid on provincial differences in the matter of censorship of films except in regard to religious films?

A. I don't think there is much difference. I think the Muhammadans here are as particular as their brethren in other parts of India, though they may not be so orthodox.

Q. We know of one instance where you passed a film in Bombay and which was objected to in Delhi, I mean the "Moon of Israel?"

A. I don't see it down in my list. I saw the film in London, and I certainly did not see anything objectionable in it. It might have been passed

by the Calcutta Board. I don't think the Muhammadans of Bombay would have objected to it.

*Q.* When you make a general proposition like that in a country like India regarding religious differences, I want to examine the truth of that, and I want to know whether really there is such a difference between the provincial angles of vision?

*A.* I think it would be better for you to wait until you have got to more backward parts of the country. I think it is very desirable that the Committee should visit some of the backward parts.

*Q.* Don't you think the railways have made a world of difference in the ideas of the people?

*A.* They are bringing people more and more into the cities.

*Colonel Crawford:* Do you think the Central Board can certify a film and say that it is suitable for certain parts of the country and through you issue a licence which we call a B certificate which will necessitate that film being passed by some particular man in each province? Will it be a practical method?

*A.* If we had a Central Board, that ought to be able to say definitely whether it is suitable for censorship in a province or not as it would have a representative from most of the provinces.

*Q.* But most of the censoring work is on moral grounds and you can do the major portion of the work without requiring provincial guidance, and it is only in a few films that you would require definite aid from the provinces?

*A.* Yes.

*Chairman:* From what you just say it is clear that things must be fairly satisfactory?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* What is passed by the Bombay Board is generally accepted by the other Boards, is it so?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* One of the difficulties you mentioned about the Central Board related to getting representatives from each province. But is it really necessary to have a representative from each province?

*A.* I don't think you could then call it a Central Board, and in that case you may say the Bombay Board should certify the films for the whole of India.

*Colonel Crawford:* Would it not be under the Government of India? They can locate the Board anywhere they like. Will every province accept the orders of another province?

*Mr. Hamill:* Many of them do.

*Q.* In the case of a film which is passed by the Bombay Board and rejected by the Calcutta Board, there is some feeling that each Provincial Government should back up its own Board, and in such cases there must be a co-ordinating authority to decide the matter?

*A.* Why should they worry about it when they have got the power in their hands.

*Q.* If the trade can get universal rejection of an imported film, it can get back its money?

*A.* It would not pay them unless it is universally certified.

*Mr. Mandlik:* We did not find anything objectionable in the film called "The Triumph of the Rat." It was rejected in Bengal but passed in Bombay, and the two Boards differed. It may not be suitable for Bengal, but it was found quite suitable for Bombay. Much will depend upon the mentality of the people.

*Chairman:* I should like to know whether there is really much difference in the provinces?

*A.* I don't think there is much difference.

*Colonel Crawford:* That particular film, "The Triumph of the Rat", was not banned in Bengal because it was particularly harmful to Bengalees but because in the opinion of the Bengal Board it was not a suitable film to be shown. It was not a question of provincial requirements there.

*A.* Well, if you had a Central Board and a film had been certified by the Central Board, could the district magistrate in any district in India not suspend that film?

*Q.* You would have to retain that particular right. But wouldn't that safeguard your provincial position sufficiently?

*A.* But they have that safeguard at present.

*Q.* But would not that Central Board, plus the powers of a district magistrate to suspend a film that was objectionable locally, wouldn't that be a sufficient arrangement rather than having a separate Provincial Board in each Province?

*A.* It would deprive local boards of the right to pass films that the Central Board thought were harmful.

*Q.* But if you are going to have a Provincial Board in each Province, you have got to pay Rs. 5 in each Province.

*Mr. Green:* The suggestion is that the present system should continue; that a certificate by one board should be sufficient for India until it is suspended by a particular authority.

*A.* Once we pass a particular film, they do not pay any more.

*Colonel Crawford:* But supposing Calcutta examines it?

*Mr. Green:* Then they do it on their own.

*A.* No separate fee is necessary, so far as I understand. If the Bengal Board passes a certain film and it comes here, we do not charge any fee.

*Colonel Crawford:* Would there be any more finance available if you did it all centrally. If the Boards of Calcutta and Bombay were concentrated in one place, wouldn't that be a better position?

*A.* We have only got one Inspector at present. I don't know how many Calcutta has got.

*Mr. Byramjee:* It means importing to one particular place.

*Colonel Crawford:* You have got to import to one particular place.

*Mr. Byramjee:* Then you will be giving the monopoly to one port.

*Colonel Crawford:* How do the films come to-day? Mainly by post or by ship?

*Mr. Byramjee:* In different ways. They are inflammable articles.

*Colonel Crawford:* I imagine the quickest route for Calcutta is to import through Bombay.

*Mr. Green:* I suggest the Collector of Customs could give us particular figures about that. Would you give us the number of feet imported here as against the number of feet imported in Calcutta?

*Mr. Watkins:* Your question is whether they come in by post or as freight?

*Colonel Crawford:* My impression is that the whole of the films that come to India at present really come through Bombay.

*Mr. Watkins:* I could certainly give you figures for that.

*Mr. Hamill:* A good many of them go into Calcutta by way of Australia and Japan.

*Mr. Neogy:* I imagine that all the films that come into Bombay are examined by the Board of Censors of Bombay?

A. They might go to Calcutta.

*Mr. Neogy:* The total quantity of films imported into India in the year 1926-27 was one and three-fourths crores, out of which Bombay only examined 5 lakhs. I am speaking of imported films.

*Chairman:* I have got the figures here. The length of film examined totalled for all India in 1926—52,65,000 feet. The figures are given for each year.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* These are the ones that are examined. There may be others that go into the hands of the importers direct, to be shown for private audiences.

A. No. They go to Indian states.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* I think that is what Mr. Dwarkadas said in the Bombay Council.

A. He probably referred to Indian Princes.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* There are several that go direct to the importers without examination.

*Mr. Green:* Colonel Crawford is at present asking actual importation, how the films actually come in. I understood from you that there is an importation directly from America *via* China.

*Chairman:* I think we could get proper information about that from the Customs department.

*Mr. Watkins:* I could give you the imports here.

*Chairman:* And the Director of Commercial Intelligence would be able to give us information.

As regards the Central Board, you have stated to us the difficulty which you feel in the matter. Would you press for a certificate issued by a central authority acting on behalf of the Government of India, subject to the local difficulties that were raised and subject to the powers reserved to the district magistrate and other powers that look after district interests? It has the advantage of uniformity.

A. That is the only advantage that I can think of, that there would be uniformity.

Q. Then the Government of India will also be in a position, if they have to take steps to encourage the growth of the indigenous industry of the country, to deal with this matter. It will be one central authority dealing with the whole industry.

*Mr. Hamill:* But is the intention, Sir, that the Central Board shall also censor films produced in the provinces.

Q. I suppose that would be the idea.

*Mr. Hamill:* That is what I inferred.

Q. But if you had a central adviser as is proposed, with deputies in each province, that would solve your difficulty. He would be a sort of central advisory officer to co-ordinate the work of the provincial boards.

A. Well, if it was thought to be necessary. I do not think it is necessary to go to that expense because you would have to have a fairly highly-paid officer as a central advisory officer. If the Government of India can afford it, it would probably be useful.

*Mr. Hamill:* May I ask, Sir, whether we are now considering the advisability of having a Central Board in addition to the present permanent boards or in supersession of the present provincial boards?

*Chairman:* You want to look at it from both points of view, with provincial boards and then without provincial boards.

A. It is a question of having a central co-ordinating officer who would be acting in an advisory capacity.

*Mr. Hamill:* Well, what is the idea that his functions should be?

Q. The main idea is to get uniformity of censorship.

*Mr. Hamill:* But it would surely be impossible for any individual to make the Bombay Board and the Calcutta Board think exactly alike on the moral significance of any films, and if they differ, they differ and no co-ordinating authority can make them think alike.

*Colonel Crawford:* I understand the position to-day hits the trade very hard. An imported film is rejected by Bengal, passed by Bombay and they are stuck with it. They have not got the full market for it. In a case like that, could not an appeal lie on behalf of the trade to the co-ordinating authority?

*Mr. Hamill:* Well, what happens at present is that the trade brings in a film and generally if they have any doubt about its passing the Bombay Board, they do not submit it here. They try it in either Calcutta or Rangoon.

*Secretary of the Board:* But even now they have a right of appeal to the Local Government.

*Mr. Hamill:* But if that Board rejects the film they then take it elsewhere, perhaps to Bombay, and between the exhibition in Calcutta and the exhibition in Bombay certain parts are excised, and the modified film is put up here and we may pass it. That has happened.

*Mr. Green:* If it did not pay them to get recognition in one province and not in another, why should they put up a film for a second examination? If they never put it up to another Board for examination, why should they excise the objectionable part if they want it to be refused a certificate?

*Colonel Crawford:* Well, if that is the fact, then the trade has no cause to complain. I understand with regard to this particular film, "The Triumph of the Rat", they wanted to have it rejected, surely their policy would apply to get the money back.

A. I don't believe for a moment that that is true. They were very anxious to get it passed. As a matter of fact, there was a substantial difference between the length of the film in Bengal and the length put before us in Bombay. If they were anxious to have it rejected, surely their policy would have been to put the most objectionable film before us?

*Chairman:* Would you accept the suggestion that an appeal may lie to the central authority instead to the Local Government?

*Mr. Hamill:* I think it is highly objectionable.

Q. It dispenses with the appeal to the Local Government to have an appeal only to the central authority from all the provinces.

*Mr. Hamill:* I do not think it is desirable.

*Mr. Green:* Because of provincial differences?

*Mr. Hamill:* And because of the everlasting wrangling that would go on over any film that is turned down by the Board of Censors.

*Chairman:* But there are not many appeals now to the Local Government.

*Mr. Hamill:* But if you make an appeal possible, litigation is not unpopular in this country.

Q. But now you provide appeal to the Local Government which is not very much availed of.

A. Well, remember that is probably because we do not reject many films.

Q. Of course, there are so many practical difficulties to be considered in that connection. Do you think the trade will stand any registration fee for inspection?

A. Well, at present they pay Rs. 5 for a thousand feet.

Q. Other countries pay very much more.

A. In England they pay one pound for a thousand feet. That is three times as much as the trade pays in India.

Q. Do you think any great hardship would be done financially if—

A. I am afraid I do not know much of the financial side of the matter.



**Q.** On the other hand, I may mention that the income is much less. The rates charged for the various classes in cinema theatres are much less than the tickets.

**Secretary of the Board:** You mean the income to the trade is small.

**A.** What makes you think that? I always pay more in India than I do in England.

**Secretary of the Board:** Here it is two or three annas, while there it is six pence. I am talking of the lower classes of seats.

**Q.** If any readjustment entails additional cost, that may fall on the committee?

**A.** It will have to fall on the trade, because Government will certainly not subsidise an industry like the film industry.

**Q.** One other question. You have admitted that it would be preferable that films should be seen by more members of the Board. Of course, you have got a very efficient secretary?

**A.** We are fortunate in having a very efficient inspector and secretary. The inspector's pay is Rs. 300 rising to Rs. 500.

**Q.** And what are his qualifications?

**A.** He is an M.A., LL.B. of the Bombay University, and he has also travelled in Europe in the company of Mr. Sharp, the late Director of Public Instruction of the Bombay Presidency.

**Mr. Hamill:** He has had seven successive years of experience.

**A.** I certainly do not agree that it would be preferable to have an examination by two members of the Board. I think that the other arrangement is preferable.

**Q.** You mean the inspector's examination in the first instance.

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You mentioned something about the Collector of Customs. He is rather an important officer in regard to foreign films if he can be given facilities for inspecting them. He has no facilities now, especially when films pass through Bombay. And supposing he had certain facilities for examining those films, he would be the best person to find out whether objectionable films go through or not.

**A.** The only objectionable films which come through are not examined by the Customs.

**Mr. Green:** You mean they are smuggled.

**A.** I should prefer not to mention it in the presence of the press.

**Chairman:** Do you think the film producing places should be registered and licensed?

**A.** We are only licensing places of public entertainment, for instance, cinema shows are licensed but the studios are not licensed. I think it would be desirable to have them licensed.

**Q.** But what would be the object?

**A.** Because if they are licensed we would have the right to inspect them if we thought it necessary.

**Q.** Do you mean the board or the police?

**A.** I mean the police.

**Q.** Well, I think I will deal with you as a police officer separately.

**Mr. Green:** May I first be quite clear? We are examining Mr. Healy now as Chairman of the Board and not as Commissioner of Police.

**Chairman:** Yes.

**Mr. Green:** I think I am right in saying, Mr. Healy, that before the criticisms of Mrs. Rolfe and Dr. David Lees, somewhat similar complaints were made once or twice in Bombay? I think a certain prominent lady in Bombay once addressed the Board mentioning one or two definite films—Mrs. Hodgkinson. That case was investigated and it was found that she was

mistaken. It was found that she had not seen any of these films at all but that she had merely gone on the advertising material.

A. Yes, that is so.

Q. I think a very prominent churchman on one occasion also criticised films and it was discovered that he was criticising films of which he had only seen the posters?

A. Yes.

Q. I understand that this deputation from the Social Hygiene Delegation never approached the Board at all?

A. Yes, that is so.

Q. I thought they could not have done because in one place they say that two censors have been appointed in Bombay. The President has also referred to that. Did the Board receive a copy of this communication?

A. No.

Q. From the very complete extracts read by the President the Board unanimously considers that this deputation is absolutely misinformed as to the facts of the situation? That is what I gather.

A. Quite.

Q. I gather the Board is generally satisfied with the standard of the censorship, though it does consider that for certain less advanced portions of the country stricter censorship is necessary. That is the opinion of the whole Board, not only of Mr. Healy.

A. Yes.

Q. That brings us to the question of the mechanism of censorship. I am afraid I may be repeating a little but I am trying to clarify my own impressions of what the board feels. Is the principal reason why the board is opposed to one central board, that no one central board could decide what was good for Bombay, what was good for Upper Sind, and what was good for Bengal or Madras?

A. Not without representatives from all the provinces on the board which I think would not be a practical proposition.

Q. Representatives might mean several representatives. You would have different classes and religions to represent.

A. It would be a very large board. I do not consider it is practicable at all. Films may have to come up frequently for their decision. And how are you going to get them to Bombay in time?

Q. It could not be perpetually in session.

A. Well, it would have to be.

Q. And if it was perpetually in session, it would not be any use. And would there be sufficient work to keep it perpetually in session?

A. It would have to be here whenever it was required. For instance, it is loss to a firm to have certification delayed.

Q. May I take you to a slightly different point? The suggestion, which the Board is averse to, is that, however the Board is constituted, the principle should be that two members of the Board should see every film.

A. Yes.

Q. Now I understand that you examine in Bombay every day about 12,000 feet of film, approximately 3 hours' work a day. And if you had to find two members of the Board for this work, each would be occupied 3 hours a day.

A. Yes, you would have two members of the Board occupied 3 hours.

Q. And your opinion is that you could not get gentlemen of sufficient standing and general experience to do it?

A. That is our conclusion after discussion.

Q. Not even if they were paid very considerable fees?

A. Well, the proposal was as suggested that they should get Rs. 15 the first hour and Rs. 10 each subsequent hour, that is Rs. 35 a day for each person.

Q. And again it would mean a large panel to choose from, I take it, because you again need representatives of different communities and religions?

A. Yes.

Mr. Hamill: There is another point. It seems to me it is much better to put the onus upon one individual and make him responsible for the passing and rejecting of every film that is put before the Board. Of course, in the event of a dispute between the exhibitor and the inspector, the matter can always be referred to the Board as at present. But it is a very valuable thing indeed to have the onus upon one man's shoulders and not upon two.

A. That is presupposing he is a capable officer.

Mr. Hamill: Well, if he is not a capable officer, the Board should get rid of him.

Q. The Board must be satisfied that their officer is capable and efficient and that he is a conscientious officer. I understand the Board is satisfied in that respect.

A. Yes.

Chairman: Don't you think that two heads will be better in dealing with a matter like that?

Mr. Hamill: I do not think so. In the vast majority of cases there is no doubt about the suitability of the film at all. Only a very small minority of the films are referred to us for decision.

Mr. Green: I was going to ask you about the Central Board, but I think you have made your point clear.

Mr. Mandlik: Certain hints are given to the Inspectors for guidance. Generally they do not go beyond them and therefore the work is lightened very much.

Q. The Board, I take it, much prefers examination by full time paid stipendiaries rather than by part-time officers?

Mr. Hamill: I do.

Q. Am I correctly representing the Board's view?

Mr. Hamill: That is my opinion.

Mr. Watkins: I personally do not subscribe to having only one paid man. I should have no objection to having two paid men.

Mr. Healy: That is my opinion also. I should like to have two men.

Mr. Watkins: When one man goes on leave I would overlook the necessity for two men. I am inclined to think that it would be better to have two men, but they must be whole-time men who would lose their job if they made a mistake.

Q. They should be responsible for their work and it is not a question of losing fees for one hour or two, but of losing their job if they did not do their work properly?

A. Yes.

Q. I refer briefly to one point that you raised, Mr. Healy. You consider that in some measure European prestige is damaged by certain films, but you are not inclined to think that it is serious enough to justify any further intervention of the censorship?

A. Yes.

Q. Don't you consider that some such allegation must always remain while we have a conflict of ideas and civilisations as we have in every walk of life in India to-day?

A. Well, I should probably have to enter into a political question.

Q. I was thinking not so much of political matters, but I was thinking of social customs.

A. If you refer to it from the social customs point of view only, I should not worry.

Q. Here we have definitely before us written statement of an Indian gentleman who has said that kissing is actually, in the eyes of many Indians, indecent. Is it necessary to cut out from western films the sort of action even of a brother kissing his grown up sister, in deference to that feeling, or must we leave it till time and circumstance makes these things better understood?

A. I should certainly not interfere with that practice. (*Laughter.*) But I do not think it does much harm.

Q. That really is the ground on which you do not advocate a very much stricter censorship in that respect?

A. Yes.

Mr. S. K. Barodawalla: I will go further and say that even the uneducated people are educated enough to know that these things are nothing. Even among Muhammadans there is no objection.

Q. You know that in every district a film can be suspended by a proper authority pending the decision of the Local Government. Has the Board had any occasion of the use of this power?

A. It is very rarely exercised. I do not recollect any case in my time in this Presidency.

Q. But would the Board object if a District Magistrate some thousands of miles away from Bombay did it?

A. It will all depend, I think, on the grounds of his objection.

Mr. Neogy: Would the Board at all come to know about it?

A. Yes. It must be reported to Government.

Mr. Mandlik: Under the Act the District Magistrate has to report. He reports directly to Government after suspension and takes orders from Government.

Mr. Green: You have had few very cases in which the District Magistrates have intervened?

A. Extraordinarily few.

Mr. Hamill: One. I think it was a question of education of Muhammadans in Sind and their power of appreciating a particular film. We passed the film and it was stopped by a District Magistrate in Sind because he thought that it might inflame the Muhammadan feeling up there. A very highly specialised case which no general body could deal with and the matter was referred to us.

Q. If you passed a film with certain excisions I understand the certificate is marked in a special way?

A. Yes, with a triangle.

Q. And that certificate is also shown on the screen before the film is exhibited?

A. Yes.

Q. Therefore any local authority who sees either the Board of Censors' certificate on the film or the original certificate will know if a single word or an inch or a foot has been excised?

A. Yes.

Q. And it is therefore up to that authority to have a special watch on it?

A. Yes. And, of course, the excised parts are given to us now. When we order a part to be excised, the parts after excision are sent to the Secretary of the Board.

Q. Do you think that any other precaution is necessary to warn district officers?

A. I do not think any extra safeguard is necessary. I think the power of the District Magistrate, and in the Presidency Towns, of the Commissioner of Police, to suspend a film which they consider objectionable is sufficient.

Q. Do you consider that the Act gives sufficient certainty that uncertified films will not be exhibited or that films that had been corrected in any way would not be tampered with before exhibition?

A. It is possible, but the risk of a firm doing anything like that is very great. I do not think they would attempt it.

Q. You think the Act is sufficient to meet that?

A. Yes.

*Colonel J. D. Crawford:* I want to get the opinion of the Board on this question of the nature of films. Taking for granted the point which you made that for dramatic purposes you must make some call on crime and the lower life, do you consider that in the films exhibited generally to-day throughout the world there is an excessive emphasis on this point or not? Are the producers really over-emphasising it?

*Mr. Hamill:* If you mean by over-emphasising, are they presenting a true picture of life or not, of course they are over-emphasising, but we should remember that the producer's aim is to attract audiences, and if you agree there then you must over-emphasise that particular aspect.

Q. Is it perfectly justified from the point of view of the society that he should be entitled to do so?

*Mr. Hamill:* I think it is as justifiable as the production of crime stories or detective stories. They over-emphasise the sensual and seamy side of life.

*Mr. Green:* Even the newspapers.

*Mr. Hamill:* Yes.

*Col. Crawford:* I come down to the question of Provincial Boards, because you say that the Central Board must have a representative of every province on it. And yet actually to-day you see a film passed by the Bombay Board of Censors is shown all over India with very occasional exceptions. A film censored by the Bengal Board is equally shown all over India.

A. Then, what is the point in having a Central Board?

Q. My object in having a Central Board is to get uniformity in censorship, and from the point of view of finance also, if you really had a Central Board all the finances would come under one head, and there would be a saving under overhead charges and so forth.

A. What overhead charges?

Q. Say, the Secretaries.

*Secretary of the Board:* The Secretaries are part-time men for both Bombay and Bengal and in the Central Board there will have to be a full-time man.

Q. Don't you think that a full-time Secretary will be a sound proposition?

*Secretary of the Board:* There will be no saving then.

Q. What would you consider to be the ideal sort of Board? Take your own Board. I am asking apart from finance.

A. I think the system of the British Board of Film Censors is the ideal one.

Q. As an ideal worth aiming at?

A. Yes.

Q. With modifications, of course, for Indian requirements?

*Mr. Watkins:* A Committee of the Trade?

Q. A Committee of retired gentlemen.

*Mr. Watkins:* Is it not a fact that a film passed by that Board is liable to suspension in any area?

*Mr. Green:* It is not a statutory body. In effect its word is law.

*Mr. Watkins:* If it passed anything which a local authority considers objectionable, that local authority can suspend exhibition?

*Mr. Green:* Yes.

*Col. Crawford:* Is that the ideal which we should work to if we had the finance? There you have again the local authority or the District Magistrate who can suspend anything that he likes.

*A.* I think we cannot get the right stamp of man with the requisite leisure in this city.

*Q.* Would it not be a question of the amount of salary you will be prepared to pay? You would not get people on less than Rs. 1,000 a month?

*A.* That will be very expensive.

*Q.* That is what the Secretary of State considered part-time pay.

*Mr. Mandlik:* Even with a Central Board there cannot be uniformity, because many a time it has happened that a film which appeared to be innocuous to the Board was found objectionable after exhibition by the public. In that case what will be the result?

*Q.* You can arrive at a position where you can get the Board to say, "there is no use of making that type of film for India and we won't have it." It should be of great assistance to the trade I imagine.

*Mr. Mandlik:* It will be difficult for the Central Board to select films. Even if they pass a film, it may be popular in certain parts of the country and unpopular in other parts.

*Q.* I am talking of the moral side of the censorship for the moment. I should like to know whether it would be worth while to work to that ideal if the finance was forthcoming or whether such expenditure would be justified.

*Mr. Hamill:* If the Central Board is essential, then it is up to Government to find the finance to meet the situation.

*Mr. Healy:* Why should Government finance this?

*Chairman:* Are the members of the Board here appointed for any definite period?

*A.* That is a point which I think requires some attention. Originally they were appointed for one year. Then Government at the end of the year extended the period for another year.

*Secretary of the Board:* And after about two years the appointments have been pending further orders.

*Mr. Healy:* I think, though at present we have a very good Board, that it would be advisable, taking things generally, that they should be changed from time to time, say, after every two years or after every three years, so as to get fresh ideas to bear. Official members change frequently, but at present..... (*To Mr. Mandlik*): Have you been on the Board since its inception?

*Mr. Mandlik:* I am in that position.

*Mr. Healy:* Two members of the Board have been on it for some 7 years or so and I think that is a mistake. I think we had better have fresh blood from time to time.

*Q.* Would three years be reasonable?

*Mr. Healy:* I think three years would be reasonable. The only members who have been changing have been Parsi members. They have got tired of it and have asked to be relieved.

*Q.* It is not very wholesome though.

*Mr. Healy:* But there is no difficulty in getting suitable gentlemen to serve on the Board, and I think it is desirable that we should have fresh blood from time to time.

*Q.* I take it that the Board would suggest that the British Board of Film Censors is the ideal towards which we should aim?

*Mr. Hamill:* For each Presidency or for the whole?

*Q.* For the whole country.

*Mr. Hamill:* I do not think so.

*Mr. Healy:* I should incline to aim at that. But it certainly is not, in my opinion, practicable at present.

*Q.* On what grounds? I do not follow you.

*Mr. Healy:* The financial aspect itself is a considerable obstacle in my opinion. To be able to pay these well-educated and experienced men appointed to the Board in place of Inspectors, to give their time, even supposing you pay them Rs. 450 a month, that is what I was thinking of myself, and three hours' work a day—you certainly in Bombay would not get the men to do it.

*Q.* Not the men with the necessary qualifications?

*A.* For instance, Bombay in the first place is very expensive to live in. Take, for example, a retired Collector or a retired Sessions Judge. He could not afford to retire to Bombay; he is the best type of man suitable for censorship work, but you cannot get him in Bombay. He could not afford to live here on his pension even with the Rs. 450 a month that I propose to offer him.

*Q.* The salary for that sort of person would have to be more in the neighbourhood of Rs. 1,000 if you mean to attract him?

*A.* That would attract a suitable person.

*Q.* You do not hold so much to the opinion that you must have provincial representation on the Central Board in that in actual practice to-day a film passed either by the Bengal or the Bombay Board is exhibited in other provinces with very rare exceptions?

*Mr. Watkins:* Other provinces have the option, whereas if you constitute the Central Board you would not have the option.

*Q.* Only certain provinces have the option?

*Mr. Watkins:* They all have. Some do not exercise the option even to the extent of constituting the Board.

*Q.* There is, of course, I know the objection of one province not being spoon-fed by another, but I do not think there is any legitimate grievance in actual practice. To-day do they not accept what the Bombay Board and the Bengal Board do, in most cases?

*Mr. Watkins:* Yes.

*Q.* You were talking about audiences in backward parts in Sind. Can you give me any idea of what these audiences are like. Could you get travelling cinemas to work in the mofussil? Are they a paying proposition? I am thinking of it from the industry point of view. Is there any possibility of expansion of cinema into the districts?

*A.* All the headquarter towns in Sind of the different districts have got cinemas. You are thinking of taking them out into the villages. That would not pay.

*Q.* The Railway people gave us to understand otherwise.

*A.* They have not charged for admission?

*Q.* No. They gave us to understand that many people paid railway fares to come in to see and they left us with the impression that there might be a paying audience in the mofussil.

*Mr. Hamill:* I believe in the mofussil, outside Poona, that film producers will not let out their films unless the exhibitors guarantee something like Rs. 30 to Rs. 50 a day, whereas in Poona and Bombay they accept something between 45 and 50 per cent. of the takings.

*Q.* Do you think the Censors' Board can help the producer in any way, to prevent him from producing films that are likely to be rejected by the Board?

*A.* They can always consult us.

*Q.* Do they consult you now at all?

*Mr. Mandlik:* Only general hints are given to them.

*Secretary of the Board:* Printed copies of our suggestions to the Inspectors have been sent to the producers telling them the sort of thing that is likely to be objected to by the Board. They know the principles on which we work.

*Q.* You do not think the censorship of scenarios is possible?

*Mr. Hamill:* I do not say it is impossible. If they submit scenarios before a film is actually put in hand they can get advice, but that is not really of much value to them.

*Mr. Mandlik:* It may lead to confusion. If the scenario is approved first and afterwards the film is rejected, there may be trouble.

*Mr. Neogy:* I understand, Mr. Healy, you were not on the Board in 1924.

*A.* Yes, I was, for 8 months.

*Q.* In February 1924?

*A.* Not February. I came on on the 1st of March.

*Q.* Has there been any great change in the personnel of the Board since then?

*A.* No change since I was here last except in the official element.

*Q.* Now I find that the President of the Bombay Board of Film Censors wrote a letter to the Government of Bombay on the 27th February 1924 in which he dealt with some of the questions with which we are here concerned, and they refer particularly to the question as to whether the censorship was lax and particularly whether a certain class of films were being exhibited which were harmful to the prestige of the white people; and on that point this is what they state—I am quoting from the letter of the Board: "The criticism of the work of this and the other Indian Boards implied in the despatch of the Secretary of State appears to be based in some measure on a very ill-informed leader printed in the London "Times" and on the statements contained in a letter in that journal written by one who is obviously influenced by trade considerations." And when I refer to that leader of the "Times" and the letter which appeared in the "Times" I find that there is this specific point, that certain films made in the United States while they may appear to the Englishman as simply ridiculous, may be very harmful in India. Then in the letter attention is drawn to the danger of showing unsuitable films to natives of the East, more particularly in India. And then the writer of the letter refers to the correspondence which a lady residing in India had had with him and quotes from her letter the feeling that as Indians go more and more to the cinema they must despise the British nation. In view of that information before the Board, the Board came to the conclusion that the whole agitation was prompted by interested people, people who were interested in the trade in England. I take it that the Board has not since departed from the opinion.

*A.* I cannot say on what the Board at that period based their opinion. They must have known who the writer was. They must have had some information as to who the writer was.

*Q.* The writer was the General Secretary of the British National Film League. It was he who wrote to the "Times." On that the "Times" wrote a leading article and the Board also had that letter before them when they gave expression to this view.

*Mr. Hamill:* The trouble with that letter is that it suggested that films are produced with the intention of showing the normal life of a country and, with the exception of special educational films, no films are produced with that object at all.

*Q.* No, it was pointed out that there was some apprehension that what was a faked picture could be taken to be a real everyday occurrence in India by the people to whom the thing was being exhibited. That was the danger to which they were referring.



A. That danger will remain no matter who produces the film. Whether it is a British or an American company that produces, they will have to cater for people who want sensation; and as long as sensation is the aim of the film the film is not a representation of normal national life.

Q. And there is nothing to choose between the British and the American so far as this particular point is concerned?

Mr. Healy: Oh yes, the American is a much more sensational type of film generally speaking.

Q. But have you either rejected or passed with endorsement a larger proportion of British films than American films in your experience?

A. The Inspector informs me that in very few cases are British films cut or excised.

Q. With reference to another point you stated that the absence of criticism in the press in India is the criterion of efficiency of censorship.

A. I think I added one more—letters from the public to the Board, as well as criticism in the press.

Q. Which paper do you think may be said to represent English public opinion in Bombay?

A. The "Times of India."

Q. I find the "Times of India" also practically endorsed the view which your Board took in the year 1924, that the cry for stricter censorship had been raised by interested people. I have here a reprint of an article which appeared in the "Times of India" on the 21st April 1926 where they ridicule the whole idea and say that American films should certainly be fought by business competition but that to try to suppress them by the hypothetical plea of Imperial welfare is merely ridiculous.

A. Oh yes. I have got the views of Government on this question, that the aim should be to get the best films. The place of production is immaterial. Indian films if they are up to the others in quality will naturally be preferred by the patrons of cinemas. Film production is not a trade essential to a country's prosperity, if indeed we cannot go further and say that as a luxury trade it is actually wasteful and there is no reason to protect the Indian film producers. Similarly films produced within the Empire must stand or fall on their own merits. If the Americans do better they must win; naturally moral tone and educational value are included among merits.

Q. But the "Times" in that article was referring to the cry that was raised that a certain class of films was detrimental to the white men's prestige. (Mr. Neogy here read out a passage from the article in question.)

A. Charlie Chaplin and Harold Lloyd represent only the comic side of things.

Q. But they were taking this particular point made in certain quarters. They also refer to Sex films. (Mr. Neogy here read another passage.) I want to know whether that can be said fairly to represent the general British opinion in Bombay?

Mr. Watkins: The "Times of India" has a large Indian clientele that it also caters for. It has a much larger number of Indian subscribers.

Q. But does that affect editorial opinion in any matter? It does not do so on our side of India.

Mr. Watkins: Your side is very much better supplied with newspapers.

Q. So on this particular occasion you think the "Times of India" did not represent the Europeans view correctly?

A. Well, the European view varies considerably as you will find from the witnesses you examine.

Q. The question is whether we should lay down a stricter rule of censorship in regard to a certain class of films apart from the effect which they may have on the morals of Indians. That is the question more or less. That is to say, whether we have to weigh very seriously as to whether

a particular film would have a prejudicial effect on the prestige of the white races; and you very properly stated that that is a question of Government policy. Now supposing European opinion were to ask for such a policy to be laid down by Government, would you think Indians would be very wrong if they were to ask for certain guarantees that the coloured races, or at any rate the Indians would not be misrepresented, let us confine ourselves to the screen for the time being,—would not be misrepresented on the screen outside India? Any such policy could only be justified in India provided such an effective guarantee was forthcoming. Do you think that that would be a very unreasonable demand on the part of Indians?

A. Will you throw "Mother India" in my face if I reply to that question.

Q. No I am not going to refer to that book.

A. Well, I shall certainly, as a censor, do everything in my power to prevent Indian civilisation from being misrepresented outside India on the film.

Q. How are you going to prevent it?

A. Unless they start exporting films from India, which will take a very long time in my opinion.

*Chairman*: They make films of India in America generally depicting the Indian as a villain.

A. I have never seen such a film.

Q. That is what I have been told.

A. But they are not produced in India. And they certainly would not be produced in England.

Q. Probably not.

A. And if a single film of that kind were produced in India and exported I should certainly apply for control.

Q. Of course.

*Mr. Hamill*: Is it not the truth that a film which will affect the prestige of the white races in this country is a film to which objection can be taken on moral grounds in practically every case. Why drag in the purely political side?

*Mr. Neogy*: I have made that quite clear—whether you want to have a separate test applied apart from questions of morality, to a certain class of films. A proposal was put forward that a certain class of films should be licensed for certain specified theatres only to which Indians do not go as a rule. That has been a suggestion that has been made; so you are not adopting one uniform standard of censorship if you have a thing like that, allowing a particular class of films to be shown for instance in the Fort area and not in other theatres.

A. That would not apply to Bombay because Indians go to all cinemas.

Q. No, the idea was that as the proportion of Indians is less in the theatres in the Fort area, whether such a discrimination could be allowed and justified.

A. No, I don't think I should like any restrictions of that kind.

Q. I mention that because a specific suggestion has been made to that effect,—to have two different standards of censorship so to say.

A. I don't think that is practicable.

Q. I am informed that in Kenya they have reserved cinemas for the white people, or rather restricted the natives to certain cinemas where specially selected films only can be shown. However you are not in favour of that.

*Mr. Hamill*: Perhaps you will let me give an example of a film which I myself helped to ban. It was perhaps not purely on moral grounds. It was a film in which an American girl was shipwrecked on the coast of Arabia and carried off by a party of Arab dacoits. I banned that because it was brought in here shortly after the time when the wife of an officer at a frontier station was carried off by some Pathans and it seemed to me just

possible that a film like that would get up to Peshawar and might suggest undesirable things to an inflammable part of the community.

*Q.* So that the principle is in operation though to a restricted degree?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Coming to the agency of censorship, I take it that you are generally in favour of the British principle more or less?

*Mr. Healy:* I personally think that that would be the ideal system, i.e., to have men of standing and education to inspect all films.

*Q.* Supposing instead of having one screen for the censors, we had two or three screens running simultaneously?

*A.* Where would you get the films from?

*Q.* The length of films that you have in Bombay average about 12,000 feet per day. Supposing you turn the Bombay Censorship Board into an All-India Board, certainly the amount of work will be trebled. But supposing we had a large panel and we managed to run three screens simultaneously, then perhaps you could reduce the attendance of members to about an hour and a half or so. Would that not make it easier for you to get suitable men every other day or every day? Suppose I mean the Board divided itself into sub-committees just as they do in England? I find from the figures available that two sub-committees manage to examine a very large quantity a year working from 10 to 5 from Monday to Friday. Supposing we had 2 hours' sitting for each sub-committee, do you think it will be possible to attract the proper type of men in the fee that you had in mind, namely, Rs. 15 for the first hour?

*A.* I don't think we can get good men.

*Q.* Although you are in favour of the British standard, you cannot suggest any practical scheme?

*A.* I should like to have the British standard, but I can't propose any practical scheme.

*Mr. Hamill:* Are you asking if this Board is in favour of that scheme?

*Mr. Healy:* I have given my personal opinion.

*Mr. Hamill:* It is better to put the whole responsibility on one whole time paid officer.

*Mr. Healy:* Every film should be inspected by two men, and these should be two full time salaried officers.

*Chairman:* You are in favour of the personnel being changed after every three years?

*A.* I should not change the whole of them. I would ensure continuity of policy by changing one each year. If you change only one man every year, continuity will be ensured.

*Mr. Neogy:* That I understand is not the British practice?

*Mr. Hamill:* I myself think that we get a good deal of fresh blood by the changes of officials.

*Q.* That is inevitable, but why go beyond that and change the others who need not be changed?

*Mr. Hamill:* An element of stability and permanency is desirable.

*Q.* Although Mr. Healy is in favour of the British standard, this goes directly against it, because their aim is to maintain continuity and take advantage of the experience of men who had been at the work.

*Mr. Healy:* I should not advise a change of salaried officers who do the actual inspecting.

*Mr. Mandlik:* I should like to say one word. I am for continuity. Although I am one of the oldest members, I am ready to resign if the Board is likely to be benefitted thereby. It will be just like making changes in the High Court Bench, and such other Institutions, but if any member is found slack, he might be changed, or he may be made eligible for re-election.

*Q.* If you ask somebody to go out for slackness, it will be a very delicate thing?

*Mr. Mandlik :* It has to be done in certain cases.

*Q.* It is an honorary work and gentlemen of ripe experience and position in society only are expected to come in.

*Chairman :* Perhaps you might say they are eligible for re-election.

*Mr. Mandlik :* I should not be misunderstood at all, because I am ready to resign to-morrow, if it be needed.

*Mr. Neogy :* Has your attention been drawn to the remarks the Commissioner of Police in Rangoon has made about the work of the Bombay Censorship Board? This is what he says:—"It is a regrettable fact that several films passed by Bombay have had to be turned down in whole or in part in Rangoon . . . because the Rangoon Board considered them as unworthy of being shown in any civilized country."

*Mr. Byramjee :* They must be a hyper-sensitive body of people.

*Mr. Hamill :* These general statements do not really get us very much "forrader."

*Mr. Mandlik :* I remember a certain case in which a strong representation was made by the Burma authorities on these very lines, and then the Chairman of our Board sent a long explanatory letter. It was subsequently found that the officer concerned did not see the film himself but depended on the report of his subordinate.

*Q.* While we are considering the question of the Central Board, we have to remember how sensitive some of these provincial bodies are likely to be. I am not in any way casting any reflection on the work of the Bombay Board.

*Mr. Hamill :* Have you seen the article in the Indian Daily Mail which accuses this Board of being too severe?

*Mr. Neogy :* I have seen it.

*Q.* Now, on the point whether the provinces are likely to accept or agree to the location of a Central Board either in Bombay or in Calcutta, I would like to point out the opinion of the Government of Bengal, and they say the decision of an All-India Board sitting at Bombay would not always be acceptable to the enlightened public opinion in Calcutta or Madras and that the local public would be dissatisfied with the system . . . . . Supposing we found it possible to get the services of very efficient men on moderate remuneration somewhere else, would you be prepared to submit to the judgment of that All-India Board sitting somewhere else? Would Bombay opinion take a somewhat similar view as is taken by Bengal?

*Mr. Barodwalla :* We will seriously object.

*Mr. Mandlik :* The only way is that there should be more salaried officers.

*Chairman :* Now, there are a few questions on which I should like to trouble you. I see from the list of films you have objected to during the last three years, in the film called "Chandrarao Moray" in the endorsement you say the words "Swaraj Flag" and "Crescent" have been cut out wherever they occur in titles both in English and Vernacular. Then again in Reel VIII the words "in freedom" have been cut from the title "My sons! die in freedom rather than living in Shivaji's service." Why was it done?

*Secretary of the Board :* It was thought that there was some political significance in it.

*Q.* Was it done by the Board or by the Inspector?

*A.* It was done by the Inspector with the concurrence of the producer.

*Q.* You think that if the matter had come before the Board they would have approved of it?

*A.* It is only altering the caption.

*Mr. Hamill :* These headings have to be read in their context.

**Q.** The words "in freedom" have been cut out from the title, and that shows a certain amount of nervousness?

**A.** Any film connected with Shivaji's exploits requires very careful examination. But everything will depend upon what follows. The Inspector did it, but first they consulted the producer and he had no objection to its being cut out. This was done during a period when our permanent Inspector was on leave.

**Q.** Then there is another instance. The words "Swaraj Flag" and the "Crescent" have been cut out wherever they occur both in English and in Vernacular. What was wrong with it?

**A.** That was probably owing to the communal disturbances. This film apparently dealt with a conflict between Hindus and Muhammedans, and so the words were cut out by the Inspector.

**Mr. Mandlik :** The word "Swaraj" may not do harm to educated people, but if it is shown to illiterate people, it is bound to do harm.

**Q.** Then again on page 16, in the film called "My Wife," "We are not ashamed to conduct the women's suffrage. They do it in England much more vigorously." What is wrong with it here? I am drawing your attention to all these to show that the censorship here has been too severe, and I want to point out that there is great danger in leaving these things to judge in the hands of a single nervous Indian.

**A.** If there is any objection, they can always appeal to the Board.

**Q.** If such sort of censorship is carried on, there will be a wrong impression created in the public mind.

**Mr. Mandlik :** With all respect I may say that whatever the censorship may be, there are bound to be such omissions.

**Q.** But the safety lies in having two or three men.

**Mr. Mandlik :** But where would you draw the line?

**Q.** I just asked you if you could justify it if such a thing came before you?

**A.** It was only an accidental case because the permanent inspector was away on leave.

**Mr. Green :** Surely the Board accepts responsibility, and it is not a question of apology. But do you admit the President's criticism that you are too severe?

**A.** We have to believe we are.

**Secretary of the Board :** May I point out that every report of the Inspector is placed before the President, and it must have been seen by him.

**Chairman :** In a city like Bombay I do not expect him to go through every such report.

**Mr. Hamill :** These cases are between the months of August and November. Have you come across any more outside that period?

**Q.** There are so many which I have noted here. You are too careful, I see, about the criminal methods employed. I see that in reel V, you suggest the cutting out the part of the scene where Salabatkhani uses a chloroformed handkerchief?

**A.** I think it is desirable to cut out such things.

**Q.** Do you think that the people are so ignorant that they do not know these things and that they are learning them only from the Cinema?

**Mr. Hamill :** It is in our instructions to the Inspector that he should take out anything which suggests poisoning.

**Q.** That is merely to render the victim unconscious? The effect of chloroform is well known.

**Mr. Barodawalla :** Yes, but by actually showing it, some people become too impulsive and would like to try it. I think we ought to stop such things.

**Q.** My point is that such rigour might interfere with the growth of the art. Then again there is a reference on page 25 "The name of the greedy

old man to be changed from Rao Bahadur Bulakhī Ram, J. P. to Bulaki Ram Inamdar throughout the film.' What was wrong with it?

A. It was probably intended to condemn the title. Probably there may be a gentleman bearing a similar name.

Q. Then you suggest that the son of a High Court Judge should be changed to the son of a High Court Vakil?

Mr. Mandlik : I would not have done it, because I am a High Court Vakil myself.

Mr. Hamill : Do you think that materially affects the art, whether it is the son of a High Court Judge or of a High Court Vakil?

Chairman : It shows the bent of mind of the Censorship Board. I am sure the Board may not have considered that point. It shows that you do not mind if he is a vakil's son, but if he is a High Court Judge's son, the Board minds it. It has rather an official bias.

Inspector of the Board : It was meant to caricature a certain gentleman in Bombay, and its sting was removed by changing it as suggested. It was a personal reference.

Mr. Hamill : We had another very pointed reference to a Governor of Bombay. Suppose a film company wanted to caricature a member of the Cinema Committee and introduced one of his titles. If we endorsed the film and said we could not allow it because it looks like the Chairman of the Committee, it would be giving undue prominence to what we wished to conceal.

Mr. Neogy : I believe you give the reasons when endorsing for future guidance?

Chairman : Then again on page 9, No. 4105. Why was that endorsement made?

Inspector of the Film Board : The whole film dealt with the lower life of Bombay, and they called it Bombay the Beautiful.

Q. What is the harm in that?

A. Will it not amount to social unrest?

Q. Is not social unrest needed especially in Bombay where there are many people like Miss Mayo?

Mr. Mandlik : Then there will be propagandist films.

Q. What is your objection to propagandist films?

A. We have got a very large industrial population about 150,000 people in Bombay. I think it is best to exclude statements like that.

Q. I am sure on the platform we allow them to say these things.

A. We do allow them to make these statements on the platform.

Q. I may put it to you candidly—it is in this aspect of the question that I consider the censorship of films should be in the hands of two responsible members of the Board. That is what is weighing with me.

Mr. Hamill : I do not think responsible members of the Board would be justified in passing a title like that and formenting trouble here.

Q. Very well, we will leave it to them. I would not leave it to an inspector to do it like that. Two public men sitting on a Board like that would think twice before they drop a title like "Die in freedom rather than serve."

Mr. Byramjee : But afterwards this has received the sanction of the whole Board.

Q. You accept the responsibility.

A. But there is nothing to prevent the producers from appealing to the central authority.

Mr. Hamill : I don't think, Sir, that here or in any country in the world is Government going to allow extremist propaganda to be carried on by cinematograph. It is not reasoned propaganda. It is purely sensational.

*Q.* You mean to say that propaganda through the film is not reasoned propaganda? But surely dying in freedom rather than serving is nothing political. It is a purely human sentiment.

*A.* It is very hard to give an opinion on that without seeing the setting in which the heading occurs.

*Mr. Byramjee :* You are picking out an isolated case. But if you see the thing in its context, you will be led to see that the excision was justified.

*Q.* Can you tell us whether there is any circulation, surreptitious or otherwise, of obscene films in Indian states passing through Bombay?

1. There are rumours.

*Mr. Green :* I think normally one piece of luggage with every passenger is examined.

*A.* Yes, normally. Everybody runs the risk of having his kit examined.

*Colonel Crawford :* You would not be able to say, if a private individual imports a film and even declares it, you would not be able to say what is inside that film.

*A.* We have got no method of examining it.

*Q.* Nor would you worry about examining it.

*A.* It would depend very largely on who the person was.

*Mr. Watkins :* In the case of certain passengers, we never pass it until we have passed it through the machine.

*A.* It at once excites suspicion if a private person is in possession of a film.

*Mr. Watkins :* And of course we have from time to time obtained obscene films, usually toy size, bits of films, and I can remember now a little toy cinema which worked quite well.

*Mr. Green :* Heavy penalties are impossible for the importation of these?

*Mr. Watkins :* Frankly I do not think there is any great importation as passengers' baggage.

*Chairman :* It has been suggested that the Customs Collector of Bombay or Customs officer should be given some facilities for examining films. You cannot judge of a film.

*Colonel Crawford :* He has said he has those facilities.

*Mr. Watkins :* If we suspect the film, we should have no difficulty in arranging with Pathes or somebody else.

*Chairman :* You don't think any facilities are needed?

*A.* I don't think so.

*Mr. Green :* I thought I was clear. I put questions before regarding the examination of films by 2 members. I don't think there is absolute unanimity. Mr. Healy is inclined to prefer two men. Mr. Watkins I think prefers.

*Mr. Watkins :* I should prefer 2 men rather than one, provided they were both salaried inspectors and I don't consider that your retired citizen, even if paid handsomely, is going to be so efficient as an inspector. Rs. 500 a month to an inspector who has got nothing else means very much more than an honorarium of 200 to 400.

*Q.* Assuming that we could arrange for retired gentlemen, would they be able to carry on also the inspector's functions of visiting theatres periodically seeing that only licensed films are being exhibited. That means of course working up to midnight or later.

*A.* I don't think so. I think you must have an inspector in any case.

*Another member of the Board :* By retired you mean past the age of 55. It means there will be loss of energy in the retired servant than in the paid inspector.

*Colonel Crawford* : Are you satisfied with the representation of non-official opinion on your Board?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* At present it is quite good enough?

*A.* I think it is quite satisfactory.

*Mr. Hamill* : Is the committee, Sir, taking any steps to authorise Boards of Censors to ban a film not on grounds of morality but on the ground that it is too old and that the exhibition of it is likely to damage the eyesight of the audience? There are a great many films going about this country which I think are definitely bad for the eyesight.

*Mr. Green* : What about films that you have passed that have been put through so often?

*Mr. Hamill* : It means recensoring.

*Mr. Hamill* : It is not a question of years. It is the number of times the thing has been exhibited on a good machine.

*Chairman* : You think you are not authorised now to do it?

*Mr. Hamill* : Oh no, we are not.

*Q.* After how many years?

*Mr. Green* : Wouldn't that to a certain extent be solved by the fact that a film that is as old as that would probably break, be patched up and lose some of its certified properties?

*Mr. Hamill* : I am only speaking from my experience of mofussil films.

*Colonel Crawford* : You are suggesting censoring on medical grounds.

*Chairman* : Do you think it would be possible for this committee to go to any small mofussil station to see these films?

*Mr. Hamill* : I think so. A really small one. You might possibly go to Ahmednagar.

**Further Oral Evidence of Rao Sahib CHUNILAL G. MUNIM, J.P.,  
Mr. NUSSERWANJI ENGINEER, Mr. RUSTOM C. N.  
BHARUCHA and Mr. NANABHAI DESAI, on Thursday, the  
10th November 1927.**

*Chairman* : We should like to examine you separately from the exhibitor's and the producer's point of view. Rao Sahib you are interested as an importer, not as an exhibitor?

*Rao Sahib Chunilal Munim* : Only as an importer.

*Q.* I suppose you can give us information from both those points of view.

*A.* We have two other producers left behind.

*Q.* Never mind; we will have the producers' evidence to-morrow.

There was one suggestion made yesterday which I should like to have your opinion about. Many films are being exhibited, we were told, which are almost used up and useless. It was suggested that after a certain period or after a certain number of exhibitions, the films should be sent back for recensoring.

*A.* Or for examination of the condition, you mean?

*Q.* On medical grounds; since it is very injurious to the public to allow such films to be exhibited and it was suggested that the board of censors should have power to deal with such films. Have you any information on that point? For instance, in remote parts, people take whatever they can get by way of amusement and they don't care whether it is of the best. The question is whether there should be recensoring after a certain period. I don't know the form of it—a film that has been used a hundred times, say.



A. It depends on the way it is handled.

Q. And the machinery which is used?

A. Or the carelessness of the operator.

Q. These are matters of detail.

A. I have also noticed in small towns that they exhibit films which are not very clearly seen on the screen and that affects the eyes also of the spectators there and if there is any control, say, after taking about 15 stations, if they are re-examined as regards the condition, I think there won't be much objection.

Q. You approve of the principle that a too-much used film should be subjected to re-examination?

A. Yes.

Q. Is there any possibility of laying down a general rule in that respect?

A. I don't think it is possible. I think it should be done by some officer on the spot, because this is a commodity in which you cannot say when the film has got spoiled.

Q. I see. Some films may have a longer life.

A. I know certain travelling showman who purchase condemned films from our stocks. Of course we are not selling. They purchase condemned stock and they show it by cutting pieces here and there.

Q. From whom do you think we can get any valuable information as to any general rule that can be laid down in these matters for the guidance of the censors. Is there anyone?

Mr. Dasai: I think that this method can be best solved by appointing certain qualified operators. You cannot make any general rules regarding the re-examination of films. And there is another potent argument in favour of this. An exhibitor coming to our office, wants to pay a very low price and says: "I don't care what condition the film is in, I want a cheap film." If the Government had better qualified operators to work in the different cinemas and the operators were authorised to cancel certain sorts of films which are not in a fit condition for exhibition, that would be the proper solution to this question.

Q. You mean there should be a system of licensing operators? Do you approve it as belonging to the trade?

A. It is very essential, and it will improve the trade to a very great extent.

Q. And they will be able to judge in these matters? You would give them the power. But they will be in the pay of the exhibitor. How would they be in a position to judge impartially?

A. Of course, there should be an independent man, I think.

Q. I think if you will look at the Electricity Department, you will see that practically the same thing is done there. Certain people who are not qualified are not allowed to make fittings.

Q. Anyway, you accept the principle. You are all agreed in accepting the principle, that there should be re-examination after a certain period.

A. No, we cannot agree to that. Not after a certain number of exhibitions—but if a bad film is shown.

Q. It should be open to somebody on the spot to report to some authority—this is, a film which should not be further exhibited?

A. Yes.

Q. Then I think such a power would be better vested in a medical officer. Or would you leave it to the police?

A. I think it would be a sort of hardship if such a power is given to the police or the medical department, because how will they certify that this film is not fit for exhibition?

**Q.** Well, a medical officer would be in a position.

**A.** Do we wish to be at the mercy of so many officers, the police and the medical and all that? We are going to lose this business altogether I am afraid by putting too many authorities over this business. In small towns it will be a real hardship.

**Q.** That is why we are seeking your assistance in the matter.

**A.** It can be noted down by the officer and it can be examined by the firm that supplied the film. Supposing I send a film to Surat and there a medical officer thinks this film is unfit for further exhibition, he might report the matter to us who supplied the film. But we don't want the exhibitors to be at the mercy of those officers on the spot.

**Q.** I don't suggest that. Make it the duty of somebody to make a report to some central authority that such and such a film is objectionable. I am afraid I am going too much into details, but I thought you might be able to assist us.

Then may I also ask in that connection another question bearing on the same matter. We have seen it stated that films which have been used in the country of origin are sent out here. India takes anything because she has not got her own industry and importers get used-up films in the foreign countries. Do you think some control should be exercised over this? Is it a fact that used-up films are also imported?

**Mr. Green:** Sometimes.

**A.** That may be perhaps with regard to small importers.

**Chairman:** Small or big—it doesn't matter.

**A.** Well, it won't pay them to import such films because they won't last long.

**Q.** But there are backward tribes who will be satisfied with any film. I believe it has been stated and I have seen it stated that used-up films are sent out here. I mean you accept the principle that the censor should have power.

**A.** How will they know it is a used-up film? There is no possibility of their knowing whether it is a used one. I can show you a film that was once exhibited in Bombay—they cannot say whether it is used.

**Mr. Green:** I think the position is, Sir, that after a certain amount of use the film would show signs of use.

**A.** They will cut it off and send them here. So there won't be any possibility of our detecting it. Possibly while exporting they will be cutting off. As a matter of fact, when we supply films to exhibitors, when they are returned back to our office, we examine them and cut-off those portions—small portions that have been used up.

**R. S. Chunilal:** There is no possibility for the Customs or any one else to know that it is a used copy.

**Chairman:** I dare say that some technical expert might be able to tell the censoring authority that this is a worn-out film.

**A.** But I think it won't pay the importer. There is no need to have any restriction, because, as a matter of fact, we do not import such used copies. Suppose a film is exhibited twice or thrice in America or England or anywhere else, I think that would be useless here because we cannot exhibit it at many places and get a good return.

**Q.** How do they do it in the case of films which have been used in the country of origin? I suppose they send you fresh copies?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Is the danger so great that power should be reserved in the Censors for rejecting those films which they consider having been too much used?

**A.** If they examine them that is another thing. But I do not think anybody would care to import such films.

*Q.* That is what I am asking you, whether the danger is so great as to call for any remedy.

*A.* I do not think there is any danger.

*Q.* You all agree in that?

*A.* Yes.

*Colonel J. D. Crawford:* Would it not be better if we pursued this matter to an end before we take up the general question?

*Chairman:* Yes.

*Colonel J. D. Crawford:* I would like to ask you some questions on this point. You told the Chairman that you did think that there was something in preventing the circulation of films that will damage eyesight.

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* You say if they are old films or if the lighting of the machinery showing the film is insufficient—these are the two grounds upon which a film may do harm to the eyesight?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Also there is the case of a film badly taken, which is flickering throughout, like the one we saw the other day.

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Those are the three points in which a film may do damage to the eyesight of audiences and therefore some supervision which is not too hard in its method on the trade would be useful?

*A.* By keeping trained operators.

*Q.* Then you came forward with this question of licensing operators. My first suggestion is this. When films are shown to the Censors' Board here, do you think that the censors might reject a film which is unacceptable on medical grounds, either that the film is so badly taken or flickers so as to damage the eyesight of audiences? We saw a rejected film the other day.

*A.* Flickering happens on account of the defect in the machines.

*Q.* Defect in photography too.

*A.* Photography may be dark, but that is not flickering. It would not be flickering. It happens only when there is a defect in the operating machine, not in the taking of the photographs?

*A.* No. It may be a little dark, but it won't injure the eyesight. Flickering is due to the defect in the operating machine, and for that Mr. Nanabhai suggested that we might have a license or something like that, so that they should pass a certain examination before becoming operators.

*Q.* You do not think that the censors of the Board could stop any of these at all?

*A.* No.

*Q.* However, there will be no harm in having a clause that the censors may reject on medical grounds a film.

*A.* Sometimes the photography may be a little dark on account of the weather, but that does not mean that the censor should reject the film.

*Q.* You say that it is harmful to the audiences to have such films.

*Mr. Chunilal:* That is the defect in the projection. At outstations the operators are not well qualified. The Chairman asked me about the villages and towns and I was not talking of the cities. In the villages and towns they cannot afford to pay big salaries to the operators and therefore anybody going there as an operator just begins to grind there and the cinema spoils the eyesight of the spectators on account of the flickering owing to a defect in the machine, but not a defect in the film.

*Q.* I saw a film the other day the whole of the surface of which was obviously scratched all the way through and the picture was hard to see.

*A.* Yes. Was it an American film?

Q. Indian.

A. I think Mr. Nanabhai will be able to explain it.

Mr. Nanabhai Desai: There is absolutely a different reason for that. There are four different factors working about this projection and I think if you proceed to gain a little more scientific knowledge about the subject in question you will be able to arrive at some settlement as to what should be done. Your suggestion as to putting the censors in power in regard to the condition of a film will be impracticable and will never ensure the thing that you want to do. You want to insure the eyesight of the public. That necessarily depends upon the way in which the film is projected. I can show you that a film which may have been badly photographed could be projected in the best possible way if the operator is a qualified man. About this film that you were talking of as the film had been rejected nearly two years back we did not take any care about it and it was lying on our shelves and when you have particles of dust and it is re-wound again, then they cause some scratches.

Q. I understand that. You think that there is no opportunity for the ordinary censoring board really to judge this question. Can you have some condition in the license of the exhibitor?

Chairman: Operator.

Colonel J. D. Crawford: No. Exhibitor, the exhibitor being responsible as the operator is only a paid employee of the exhibitor. The operator is the paid employee of the exhibitor?

A. Yes.

Q. And the exhibitor has to take out a license for his cinema or theatre?

A. Yes.

Q. Would there be any point in putting a condition in his license?

A. I think that point is sufficiently taken care of in the license that is granted. The electrical authority always inspects the machines at a particular period, and the other chief thing that has to be taken into consideration with regard to this question is this. In the interests of the renter and the exhibitor it never pays them to show a film of the kind that you are talking about. I think Government had better not take it into their hands and put on some legislation.

Chairman: Is it a fact that in the remote parts such films are shown?

A. How are you going to prevent exhibitors who go to these offices and say, "The only amount we possess is Rs. 25 and we want something." You must give them.

Chairman: Would you injure the public because the exhibitor wants to do it?

A. That can be prevented by the local licenses.

Q. That is what I am asking you.

A. What I want to say is that there is absolutely no necessity of any new legislation regarding this.

Q. We are asking whether such a power should be reserved in some authority.

A. The powers are already there which should be properly exercised.

Q. You think the powers are already there but they are not exercised?

A. That is what I meant to say. Supposing a man living in a remote part of the country were to come to a cinema office here in Bombay, that office may have a lot of idle stock and the man buys the whole lot for say Rs. 100. He takes them into the interior and uses them. He has very little capital and wants to make some profit out of it. You must take care that the local authority never grants any such license.

Colonel J. D. Crawford: You talk about some person coming in and buying up your condemned stock. Could not the trade do anything, such as entering into a combination, to prevent the sale of condemned stock?

A. There are different conditions operating regarding American films and Indian films.

Q. The Indian producers can only deal with Indian produced films.

A. The Indian producers practically never sell their stock. Generally we never sell the prints and the majority of the stock is taken up by some chemical works.

Mr. Neogy: What do these chemical laboratories do?

A. I do not know what they do. They guard the secret very zealously.

Colonel J. D. Crawford: What is the ordinary life of a film?

A. That depends on the manner and method in which it is exhibited.

Q. What will be the average life of a film?

A. That depends upon the make of the film that is being utilised in making the print. At present there are eight different makes in the market, some come from Germany, some from Belgium, some from Austria, some from America, from England I think there is none.

Q. Can you give me some general idea of the life?

A. Any attempt to generalise will result in a wrong statement.

Q. I have heard it said that a film can last for five years.

A. Positive copy?

Q. Yes.

A. If it is not exhibited at any place but kept very carefully and in a safe, it might last for a hundred years.

Q. I mean with a reasonable amount of use.

A. That again depends upon the number of shows that cinemas are having. Certain cinemas in India have 2 shows per day, and in certain other cinemas they have 12 shows.

Mr. Green: Cannot you say how many times it can be put through the machine? How many times? About 100 times or 1,000 times or what?

A. About 150 times. With a little care it might work 160 times and with a little carelessness it might work only 140 times. 150 times is a reasonable average.

Colonel J. D. Crawford: I presume if you get a film which was used up or portions of which were used up and sent back to you, you could replace the used portion from your negative.

A. In a film of, say, 8,000 feet, you mean to suggest that if 400 feet is spoiled we try to replace that 400 feet?

Mr. Green: Not by fresh photography but from the original.

A. It never pays the producer to do so. Comparatively every film which is so used up . . .

Q. That it will be preferable to have a re-print of the whole thing?

A. Yes. We generally reprint the whole thing.

Q. You sell to the chemical company and reprint the whole thing?

A. Yes.

Q. Would you object to somebody in the mofussil who came across a film that they thought was a definite menace to the eyesight of audience—the police calling in a medical officer with a view to having the film withdrawn and sent back to the trade? Would you think that would be too much harassment to the trade?

A. Somehow or other I cannot agree to any Government action regarding this because it cannot be properly judged. You cannot prevent certain people from playing mischief. The local mofussil exhibitor doing business with very little capital and profit manages to get enemies in the town. If these people collect together and make an application the harassment would be too much, so that I would preferably ask him to close the cinema rather than get a film certified like that.

*Mr. Green:* I have no questions to ask on this particular point.

(The other members indicating that they had no questions to put on this particular point.)

*Chairman:* Mr. Neogy will put questions on the exhibition side and not the production side.

(Answered by Mr. Nusserwanji Engineer.)

*Mr. Neogy:* You made a complaint the other day both in your written statement as well as your oral evidence about the entertainments tax. Can you give us a few figures showing how the prices of tickets have varied between the period when the tax was not in force and since the time when the tax came into operation. Let me just read out the specific statement which was made and which I want a little further elaborated. (Reads.) Have you got anything to add to that statement of yours?

A. The statement is correct. I will give you my own example. I am the owner of the Precious Cinema and the Lakshmi Cinema in Bombay. Before the tax was levied my rates of admission were for the 3rd class 3 as., for the second class 6 as., for the first class 12 as., for the sofa class 14 as., for the stall class Re. 1, for balcony 1-8-0 and for boxes Rs. 2. In the first week of the tax I paid Rs. 1,200. Gradually it decreased and it came to about Rs. 30 or Rs. 40 and I had to reduce the prices. I reduced the prices to 2 as., 4 as., 6, 7, 8, 9 as., the one rupee class was reduced to 12 as. and the Rs. 2 class was reduced to one rupee.

Q. All this exclusive of the entertainment tax?

A. No. Inclusive of the tax, that is, the second figures I gave.

Q. How is that? Including the tax?

A. Re. 1-2-0 including the tax.

Q. That is to say, on account of the imposition of the entertainment tax the audience was charged less rates of admission than before?

A. Because they did not like to pay the tax. The audience which was going in the one rupee class did not like to pay Re. 1-2-0 and instead they used to go in the 12 as. class.

Q. Was it necessary to reduce your rates any further than the rates then existing?

A. Now we have already reduced the rates.

*Chairman:* After how many weeks' trial did you reduce?

A. I tried for at least one year with the original rates.

Q. Did you charge the tax separately on the top of the existing rates?

A. In the beginning I charged tax on the existing rates.

*Mr. Green:* I mean to say, in the case of one rupee ticket your charge was Re. 1-2-0?

A. Yes. But people did not like to pay Re. 1-2-0 and therefore our income was reduced.

*Chairman:* You tried it for one year?

A. I cannot say definitely, but those figures you will get from the entertainment tax office because we used to submit a statement every week.

*Chairman:* What year was this?

A. 1922. After one year we reduced the rates.

*Mr. Coatman:* You are quite satisfied that the drop in receipts was entirely due to the tax and no other disturbing features like unemployment occurred?

A. People did not like the entertainment tax at all. It is not the public who pays the tax. It comes from the exhibitors' pockets.

*Mr. Neogy:* That is your point?

A. Yes.

**Q.** Do you think that is the experience of all other exhibitors?

**A.** Except those who show Indian films.

**Q.** This applies only to foreign films?

**A.** They have not decreased the rates. Only those who show the foreign films have decreased the rates.

**Q.** People did not mind paying the entertainment tax when they went to see Indian pictures?

**Chairman:** Is it that the Indian pictures became so popular that they attracted a bigger crowd? The people were prepared to pay more for Indian films?

**A.** Supposing the 6 or 7 annas tickets are exhausted, if they want to see the show on the particular day, they buy the tickets of the other higher classes.

**Mr. Neogy:** They do not do so in the case of the foreign films?

**A.** No.

**Q.** They prefer to wait?

**A.** When they see that the 4 annas tickets are exhausted they wait for 2 hours and again the ticket office reopens for the next show.

**Q.** Are the rates that you have mentioned almost uniform in all the theatres?

**A.** The Excelsior, the Empire and the Royal Opera House—they are a little bit higher.

**Q.** Do you ever increase the rates of admission in the case of certain special films that may be shown?

**A.** The Excelsior, the Empire and the Royal Opera House people only do it.

**Q.** On particular occasions?

**A.** Yes, whenever they get good pictures.

**Mr. Coatman:** On what sort of subjects could you raise the rates?

**A.** I think they raise the rates on Harold Lloyd subjects, Charlie Chaplin.

**Mr. Neogy:** Comic subjects more or less?

**A.** Yes.

**Colonel J. D. Crawford:** In Indian picture houses?

**A.** The rates are the same in the Indian picture houses.

**Q.** You refer to the European pictures houses, or rather the theatres patronised by the European audiences?

**A.** Yes.

**Sir Haroon Jaffer:** At times do contractors buy all the tickets of the house?

**A.** Not in the cinemas.

**Q.** I am told that in some cinemas it happens so.

**A.** I give you one example. When some of the contractors see that the picture is very popular—they can see that from the first show or the second show—then they naturally buy the lower class tickets, that is to say, so many tickets, and not in a lot. They buy 25 or 50 tickets, keep them in their pockets, and when the tickets have been sold, they sell these tickets at a profit of one pice or two pice and so on.

**Mr. Coatman:** Do you control any other houses of amusement, like dramas, variety theatres and so on?

**A.** Only cinemas.

**Q.** Do you know anything of the experience of the proprietors of those places as to this amusement tax? Has the amusement tax affected the drama or the variety theatre to the same extent?

**A.** That is not the complaint with the variety theatres, because these theatres high class people always patronise and the tax is not objected to

by the high class people as well as the low class, as the low class people are not taxed at all. But it is most objectionable from the point of view of the middle class people. In former days the middle class people used to come with their families in groups of 5 or 6 to the cinema. Now a days we do not see them at all, because if they cannot maintain themselves they are not in a position to see the cinema.

**Q.** That is a very interesting point; Mr. Chairman,—the groups of 5 to 6 people coming?

**A.** Only the middle class people are affected by the tax. The high class people do not care for the 2 annas tax.

**Q.** What is the limit beyond which you get a falling off, I mean do you get a falling off below 8 annas seats, or above 8 annas seats, or what limit is the falling off?

**A.** From 8 annas to one rupee.

**Q.** Below 8 annas there is no falling off?

**A.** No.

**Q.** Between 8 annas and one rupee?

**A.** About 60 per cent.

**Mr. Green:** Is it not a fact that the entertainment tax began in 1922 or thereabouts?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Is it not also a fact that 1922 marked the end of the boom and the beginning of a very serious trade depression?

**A.** Yes, that was a greater reason why.

**Q.** May I put my questions to you. Is it not also a fact that there was considerable unemployment and retrenchment specially among those classes who would pay 8 annas or a rupee to the cinema?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Does it not rather show, whether the entertainment tax is good or bad, the thing that affected your takings has been trade depression?

**A.** No.

**Q.** If a man is getting no pay by having lost his job, it does not matter whether the rates of admission are high or low. The fact is he cannot afford to pay anything at all. Has not the audience improved, I won't say considerably, but distinctly during the past few months, or a year, on the whole?

**A.** Not in all theatres.

**Q.** There is a tendency to improve?

**A.** I think it will improve, but they generally like to buy lower class tickets.

**Sir Haroon Jaffer:** Do you know that the Western India Turf Club used to pay a lot of money in charity but when the amusement tax was imposed they stopped doing so. Formerly they gave lakhs of rupees in charity.

**A.** In 1921 when the Council asked us to give evidence at Poona Secretariat.

**Q.** I am only asking about the Race Course.

**A.** But I will explain at that time what I said to the Council when I gave evidence there.

**Q.** I am asking you about a fact, whether the Western India Turf Club gave a lot of money in charity before the amusement tax was imposed.

**A.** They are purposely not doing so now. The Western India Turf Club is not in loss at all.

**Q.** They are saving this money, which went to charity before, for themselves?

**A.** I tell you the number of people has not decreased there. After the tax was levied the number of race-goers was not reduced.



*Q.* I only want to know this, whether the charity was stopped owing to the amusement tax coming into force, because I know some schools were given charity through me and they stopped it because they had less to give.

*A.* That was only a pretext made by the Western India Turf Club.

*Chairman:* They made it an excuse?

*A.* Yes. They can still afford it. I think it is the largest company which makes a profit in the whole of India, specially in the Bombay Presidency.

*Mr. Neogy:* So I take it that so far as the exhibitor who confines himself to Indian films is concerned, he is not affected by the entertainments tax?

*A.* I don't think so. If there were no tax on the cinemas I think still the audience will be increased on Indian pictures too.

*Q.* What I want to know is this, whether in the case of the exhibitors of Indian films the tax comes out of the pocket of the exhibitor?

*A.* The tax comes out of the pocket of the exhibitor in every case; but these exhibitors are not affected because they get good money and those who usually show foreign pictures are affected very much because they get very low audiences.

*Mr. Neogy:* Rao Sahib, you complained that the censorship was a little too strict in regard to a certain class of films. It was in reply to question No. 24 (d)—“The censorship of sex films is a bit more rigid than it should be.” Have you any specific instances in mind. Could you illustrate this statement by referring to any particular films in which you thought that the judgment of the Censorship Board was not quite right. Because we have been getting general statements of this character for some time but we are anxious to get at the real truth. We want to find out with reference to particular films as to what the exact complaint is.

*R. S. Chunilal:* I think there was only one film which was shown in the West-End Cinema some years ago, in 1920 or 1921. It was not prohibited; it was shown for 2 or 3 weeks in Bombay and there was a certificate not to show it to persons under 16 years of age. “Damaged Goods.”

*Q.* It was not a case of absolute prohibition. And that is the only instance that comes to your mind.

*A.* In Bombay that is the only instance.

*Q.* About which you can complain?

*Mr. Desai:* My friend Mr. Bharucha will be the best able to say, if you ask him.

*Chairman:* You are on the producing side, Mr. Bharucha?

*Mr. R. N. Bharucha:* I am on the exhibiting side and I was only waiting for my turn to answer the questions. That is the reason why I have not participated so far.

*Q.* You can supplement the information that the Rao Sahib may give on any point. Now on the exhibiting side we want some information, whoever can give it best.

*A.* As you will find from our answer to question No. 24 (d) we think that as sex questions are very widely discussed, the censorship of sex films is a bit more rigid than it need be. The output of such films is by no means great. So far we have had very few sex films, strictly so called, in Bombay. I remember particularly one with the title “Where are my Children?”. It had something to do with birth control, a subject on which I suppose the largest number of books was written last year. That picture was banned. With “Damaged Goods” it was the same; and I have good reason to believe that it was only on the intervention of some influential people in Bombay interested in the subject, that it was possible to put it on at a local cinema in the time of Professor Louis Peltier when he was Secretary of the Board. Some very relevant parts of the film were excised with the result that there were more titles than pictures and the picture was thrown open only to

adults. As I have said in my answer we have very few sex films but the two I have just mentioned we did have.

*Mr. Coatsman:* How do you define sex films?

A. I do not know whether I shall be able to evolve a definition offhand but I will put it this way—any film which has for its main theme the relations of the sexes.

*Q.* That is rather vague.

A. And if you have no means to put an embargo on sex films as published in England and America it is unfair to prohibit the exhibition of a picture in this country merely because it deals with a sex subject. I am for censorship of sex pictures but it must be done very intelligently.

*Colonel Crawford:* Can you tell me, as an exhibitor, whether these sex pictures are a draw from the commercial point of view? Do audiences want them?

A. I would say they do want them.

*Mr. Neogy:* Indian audiences?

A. Yes. It is my experience that every time I have called at my favourite bookseller's and asked for one of Marie Stopes's books I have been told it was sold out. There is a much greater tendency to discuss sex questions now than there was a few years ago.

*Mr. Green:* Does that apply to the millhand?

A. I make no difference. I am not in agreement with any one of you about whether the Bombay millhand should be specially catered for. My experience is if you pay a millhand a ten rupee note and give him a complimentary ticket into the bargain to go to the Excelsior, the chances are he will run away because he would prefer any day to go to one of his own shows at Parel which are run by Mr. Engineer and wholly devoted to the labouring class. They will flock round there and they will go with the same enthusiasm as if they were going to their temple. Usually Indian mythological subjects are almost exclusively exhibited by Mr. Engineer in that locality; and the Indian labourer will never go to the Excelsior when he has other pictures to go to which are more to his liking. I have no apprehensions on that point. As an exhibitor and a man of some education I have a clear idea of the duty I owe to the millhand.

*Colonel Crawford:* You are then rather in agreement with my opinion that films with a sex appeal are a draw?

A. Yes.

*Q.* And possibly the stronger the sex appeal the stronger the draw?

A. Yes, because these films invariably make an appeal to the educated. As for the uneducated they don't understand the subject and it would be vain to expect him to be drawn by such films.

*Q.* It is not a draw for the uneducated but it is a draw for the educated classes?

A. Yes, almost exclusively the educated classes.

*Q.* Are you as an exhibitor in favour of entire freedom to exploit that human weakness of audiences, if such films draw in your theatres?

A. It all depends on how the subject is treated. Personally I would think many times before I allowed myself to exhibit a picture at my theatre which I knew was not up to the standard required.

*Q.* Would you be in favour of censorship?

A. Yes. Censorship is very necessary but it must be on intelligent lines. The censors must understand from what point of view the producer has produced a particular picture.

*Mr. Neogy:* Are you in favour of a class of films being specially certified for adults only.

*Chairman:* Would not that in itself be a draw?

*A.* How can we help that? If I have got a picture for a particular week and if by any chance the Board of Censors comes in the way and wants a re-examination, I have got to account for the delay. When I notify that it is held over because the Board of Censors are re-examining it, I do not know exactly whether I am benefiting or not; but there is a great deal of expectation raised by such a picture. That cannot be helped by anyone.

*Q.* Do you think then that the censorship as at present practised is sufficiently strict?

*A.* Take it from me as an Exhibitor of some years' standing, that it is quite sufficient.

*Q.* And you don't think any more restrictions should be imposed?

*A.* No. Any more restrictions imposed will have a deterrent effect on the trade, I am positive.

*Q.* Are you particularly talking of Indian productions or Western pictures?

*A.* I am talking of pictures as a whole.

*Colonel Crawford:* You are pretty strong in your statement at (c) as to the things which ought to be cut out, including drinking scenes.

*A.* I do not say such pictures are produced. If they are produced then they should be banned in any part of the world. On that assumption I have answered. I personally think that if there are any pictures that are treated in any of those five ways I have mentioned there, then they should not be exhibited to the public.

*Chairman:* And they are now prohibited by the Censors—that class of pictures referred to there?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Do you think any distinction should be made between the West and the East in that matter.

*A.* What kind of distinction?

*Q.* In censoring this class of pictures, sex pictures, do you think a different rule should be observed from that observed by the British Board of Censors?

*A.* If it is censored subject to the proviso "for adults only" then I am getting all that I want.

*Q.* But there are adults and adults. Whom would you call adults?

*A.* There are some adults of impressionable mind and some of unimpressionable mind; but further than that I am not in a position to go, namely, that sex pictures should be passed for adults only.

*Mr. Green:* How are you to define "adult"—20, 15, 10 years of age?

*A.* That is a matter of detail. I think over 18 would be all right.

*Chairman:* That is just the age when sex films would appeal.

*A.* If the age is fixed in joint consultation between the trade and the Board of Censors a satisfactory solution can be arrived at.

*Q.* I should like to have a separate answer to my question. Do you think that the Censors out here in Bombay observe different rules for censoring films from those observed in England?

*A.* Bearing in mind sex pictures only, I want no different set of rules.

*Q.* They are not necessary? If evils exist they exist in every sort of entertainment and nice kissing girls attract more people than others?

*A.* I have seen very little kissing. I do not wish to pose as an authority on that subject.

*Q.* You cannot stop that. You cannot make a difference between the drama in India and in England?

*A.* I am told there are far too many things to be found in that great book which the Bard of Avon gave to the world which might be objected to if the rules given to the Bombay Board were strictly enforced. In "Measure

for Measure." for instance, you come across many such passages; and therefore somebody in England has made it his business to produce a Family edition of Shakespeare which can be read with safety by the fire-side. There are certain rules supplied to the Inspectors who in the first instance come and have a look at our pictures; and the first two rules throw considerable light on what I have said. The first is that "no general and rigidly applicable rule of censorship can be laid down." The second is that "it is essential to be consistent but impossible to aim at strictly logical decisions." That is what I mean when I say we want in a film censor certain temperamental qualifications. So far as India is concerned it is not a problem which cannot be got over if there is sufficient co-operation between the trade and the members of the Board of Censors which, I regret to say, is not the case to-day. If Mr. Chunilal's film is banned, he is told "Low moral tone." Now that is hardly fair to Mr. Chunilal. It is hardly possible for him, on behalf of some of his principals in America to deal with goods which are returned by the Board of Censors merely on the statement that they are of a low moral tone. He has no opportunity to represent to his foreign principals what India wants; and that is a prayer which can be very easily granted. There is at present very little co-operation between the Board and the Exhibitor or Producer.

*Mr. Green:* You mean the members of the Board or the Board as a whole?

A. The Board as a whole.

Q. You are not expecting individual members to come and interview you?

A. I don't. I should be very glad if they carry out their own code among themselves.

*Chairman:* Has co-operation been sought?

A. We have tried to get co-operation. Personally I counted the late Professor Louis Peltier among my personal friends and it was very difficult for him to make a statement on the points and the precise lines on which they have been objected to or passed. There are some rules very recently drawn up, in April or May of this year. Even then no reasons are given.

*Chairman:* I am sure I am correct in saying they were made in 1922 or 1923.

*Mr. Neogy:* Well, has there been any improvement since those rules came into your hands in regard to this particular matter.

A. It is still difficult to get a statement of reasons why a particular film has been banned, and we have no time to waste, because we have immediately to put on other pictures so as to keep the theatre well supplied. My complaint is still there, and I do hope this complaint of mine will have been heard in the proper quarters before your Committee. Sir, writes its report and recommendations to Government.

*Colonel Crawford:* Do you not get a copy of the endorsement from Government? That is not sufficient you think?

A. My complaint is we are never furnished with a detailed comprehensive statement of the grounds on which the Board of Film Censors decide to reject my picture which I say in fairness I am entitled to get.

*Chairman:* Do you make that statement in regard to Indian produced pictures or foreign pictures?

A. Both.

*Colonel Crawford:* The statements in that are not sufficient?

A. "Low moral tone" is all that they say. If I take up a subject in which I want to illustrate the beauties of virtue and the horrors of vice, it is possible when I occupy 7 reels in depicting that theme, it is possible I may have gone wrong in a short length of film in a particular reel. At the same time, I admit it might be the crucial scene; but if I am taken into confidence I will either eliminate that portion or be very careful when the time comes to produce it.

*Chairman:* Do you think it would be a good thing if before producing the film there should be consultation on Indian films at the time of production or, say, your scenario writing?

*A.* On that point I will tell you one thing. I am in sympathy with that view of the producing trade in Bombay that as little noise should be made at the time of producing a picture as possible, because I do not want my brother producer to know what subject I am producing at a particular moment for obvious reasons, reasons which I need not specify in detail. And if I get the Censoring Inspector to peep into my studio at the time I am so engaged I am sure I shall put an obstacle in the way of Indian film production. I would rather not have that. If, on the other hand, I come very largely in contact with the members of the Board of Film Censors, or rather with the Board, then I know what is going to please them and what is not.

*Q.* How will you get into contact, what is your suggestion for such opportunities of contact?

*A.* I would say every time a picture is in difficulty with the Censors, as many members of the Board should come to see it as is possible. A private view is given and it only means a few more chairs. I know the Board then and the Board knows me.

*Q.* Those in the trade might also be allowed to see the picture?

*A.* That is what I have said in answer to a further question with regard to the Central Board of Censors.

*Mr. Neogy:* You want a sort of appellate authority.

*A.* Yes.

*A.* They are not allowed to take part in any informal discussion. And the situation, Sir, is not without humour. I remember a picture which the Inspector previewed in the usual course of his duties. He brought in a couple of Members of the Board. They could not agree either. A few more members were brought in, but one of the gentlemen came in with his wife who, I am very glad to say, proved a much better censor than the whole Board put together. She kept on saying when the reel was being turned 'where is the objectionable part'.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* It means then that you want a lady Censor?

*A.* As the reel was turning she went on asking 'Where is the objectionable part; I don't see anything objectionable in it'. So the gentlemen certified that film.

*Mr. Neogy:* Do you mean to say that but for the presence of that lady the picture would not have been certified?

*A.* I illustrated only one good case.

*Col. Crawford:* Turn to page 63 of the list of films examined by the Board of Censors. Just see the endorsement against the Nos. 5062 and 5063. You see there "this film is prohibited on the ground that a rough handling of a white girl by Moors is an undesirable subject in India". Again you see against 5063 "This film is prohibited on the ground of its being of a low moral tone, sensual in parts which were deliberately portrayed to pander the lower passions".

*Mr. Green:* How are they less specific in your opinion?

*A.* When you apply that word to a film and leave it there you only generalise.

*Mr. Neogy:* Supposing certain pictures were certified for adults over 18, what responsibility would the exhibitor be prepared to undertake to see that this condition was fulfilled? Will there be any difficulty in carrying out that condition?

*A.* There will be no difficulty. We had occasions like that in our own theatres. Once we deputed a man on special duty where tickets are sold and he was particularly instructed to err on the safe side and refuse admission

to people who in his opinion were not fit to see the film. It is hardly any responsibility at all.

*Mr. Desai:* I object strongly to any films being marked 'for adults only' or anything of that kind. Regarding sex films, with all deference, as a Hindu, I have to make a special representation to the Committee. Sex questions are now-a-days being freely discussed in certain books that are sent out from America and England, and it is my sincere belief,—and I can prove by concrete examples,—that these books are doing a greater evil than anything else, and in my opinion such books dealing with sex questions should not be allowed to be imported or sold in India. By putting in the condition 'for adults only', you will really be cheating the public, because I may produce a film which may have nothing to do with sex questions, and I would put in large advertisements marked 'Meant only for adults'. That means cheating the public. I don't think such a thing would be for the benefit of the public. I am speaking now both for the European and the Indian public. I would particularly request this Committee to try and devise some means by which the importation and sale of these books dealing with sex questions can be prohibited, because the conditions of life in India are absolutely different. I want that the Government of India should exercise some sort of censorship in regard to the importation and sale of these books.

*Mr. Bharucha:* I want the sex pictures to be shown under some safeguards, my colleagues protest notwithstanding.

*Q.* The next point is about the crime films. I find you are making rather a remarkable statement, that crime films call for particularly intelligent censoring because in every crime film there is to be seen a very high level of detective ability portrayed. You seem to think that it would do good to the police by improving their detective ability?

*A.* I do not say that this is a correct description. As the Committee uses it in the questionnaire I have followed it. There is nothing like "crime" films as such. A part of the story may deal with criminal doings on the part of some one. It is your own description, and I have simply followed it. When we put such a picture before the Board and they see this description, they will immediately say "Oh, this is a crime film" and so they must be very careful. They will then absolutely ignore the very high level of detection which generally is a part and parcel of the crime film. If we show a good detective film with a certain amount of ingenuity, it would be of educational value in itself even for a police force such as we have in the city of Bombay. We give them a peep into the methods Scotland Yard.

*Q.* Perhaps in a general way it will be quite beneficial for promoting the prestige of the police?

*A.* If the police in India can come up to that level. I don't think there is any remarkable institution in India for training the police except the two schools at Sagar and Nasik, and we all know what kind of training is imparted to the police officers there. It is hardly any training at all. But if the police make it a point to study our films and take some materials for their education in the way of detection, I am perfectly sanguine that they will be doing the right thing.

*Q.* Do you know of any film in which there is any tendency to discredit the police generally and their methods?

*A.* No. While on this question, Sir, I should like to make another observation. In this province it cannot be said that any increase in crime is attributable to the cinema. I heard the Commissioner of Police making a similar statement, and I am very thankful to him, I may say on behalf of the trade, for making that courageous statement.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* There was a boy in Poona who was about 10 years of age. He was charged with theft, and when he was asked where he learnt to steal, he said it was from the Cinema. That statement is before the Magistrate.

A. I should like to be informed, Sir, if that boy was defended?

Q. He was quite clever enough, and I don't think he was defended.

A. That is why the boy must have said so, because the temptation is too great in such cases to attribute his mistake to somebody else or to something he had seen just by way of an extenuating circumstance. It is a very common experience. Rao Sahib Chhunilal being a Bench Magistrate knows it. It is only very recently that we have been hearing the talk about the cinemas fostering crime, and if I caught hold of some gentlemen from the upper stratum of society, I don't think they will be able to prove that statement any concrete examples. Here I should like to bring to your notice one thing which is happening here from day to day. I have got a copy of a paper in which the proceedings of a police court trial are given in a way which, in the light of the trial which subsequently followed, are thoroughly unjustifiable. I give this typical instance to show how the cinema comes to be abused and how it is more sinned against than sinning. It is a vernacular paper in Bombay catering very largely for the Parsee community, I mean the "Jame Jamshed". The headline of the report when translated is "What the servant saw in a cinema he tried to practise on his master's son". When such a thing goes out to the public, the attention of the conservative men at home is drawn to it and they speak of it in the clubs and ask one another "Oh, did you see the report in the Jame about what such and such a man's servant did after what he had seen in the cinema?". I should like you, Sir, to take a particular note of this extract which I am putting in.

*Chairman:* Would you like to hand it to the Committee?

A. Yes. (The extract was handed to the Committee.)

*Mr. Neogu:* I was going to ask you about the animated gazettes that used to form an essential part of the cinema programme at one time?

A. They have only changed the title. R. S. Chhunilal has got his universal screen magazines, Pathes have their gazettes.

Q. Do you find that this class of gazette films are popular with the public?

A. Yes, they are popular with the educated classes, but not with all.

Q. Is the Indian more attracted by these gazettes?

A. I personally am.

Q. Do these films relate to recent incidents?

A. Yes, as recent as it takes a film box to come from England or America by post.

Q. Are the different parts of the world covered by these gazette films?

A. Yes, they are quite comprehensive.

Q. I believe you generally show American films here even in the case of these animated Pathe gazettes, but do these films which are manufactured in America deal sufficiently with important events that happen in Europe?

A. I won't say that they deal with all important events. It is not possible to do that on the scale in which you expect Reuters to do it, for printing news.

Q. There could not be any justifiable complaint that any particular portion of the world is not being covered at present by these Gazettes?

A. Except India. One of the occasions when I would certainly expect India to figure as part of the International News would be when you see Tagore out upon one of his world-tours.

Q. Do you think it will pay the Indian producer to get similar films made?

A. I should think so, but I can't say that such a thing would be very successful, because from my experience I may say that people in England and America are not interested in India. Leaving aside pictures, even in matters of legislation, there are not many people in England and America who take any active interest in India. It is therefore very difficult to get people in England to take an interest in matters Indian.

*Mr. Coatsman:* Only in the beginning of this year there was the opening of the new Legislative Chamber by the Viceroy, and if any cinema company had attempted to take the picture, it would have attracted a large number of people in England and America, but nobody attempted it?

*A.* That could have been taken only if we had the facility.

*Q.* I was trying to get a cinema man to take it, but could get none.

*A.* I am speaking only from a cinema man's point of view. I am neither a politician nor a statesman. We have several occasions when pictures of very great interest could be taken. I would certainly love to take a picture, if I were a camera man, of the late Sir Surendra Nath Bannerjee, for instance, when delivering one of his famous orations in the well-packed Congress-pandal. That would be one thing. The Viceroy opening the Legislature would be another. The funeral of Mr. C. R. Das, and the funeral procession of the late Mr. Tilak, the Gujarat floods, in fact, there are many such scenes which could be taken.

*Mr. Neogy:* So if any condition were laid down that every show must be preceded by a sort of news picture of India and of certain parts of the Empire, would it be considered a hardship?

*A.* I would welcome such a suggestion because incidentally in times to come that would provide a solution of my friend's difficulty. I mean the language difficulty.

*Q.* It won't have any effect on the European audience?

*A.* It should not have. It does not take more than 10 or 12 minutes considering the importance of the question at issue. I expect there will be Europeans in this country who would not mind making a little sacrifice if sacrifice it can be called. The picture of Gujarat floods will interest any one.

*R. S. Chunilal:* I don't suppose that you mean that all the cinemas in a particular place should exhibit such pictures. It may be shown in one or two theatres. Provided that suitable films are available every exhibitor would as a matter of course show them and there won't be any necessity of laying down any condition like that, and if any such condition were laid down, it would be resented by the public.

*Mr. Neogy:* I find that in answer to question No. 23, you advocate the quota system. Are you prepared to advocate this from the point of view of all exhibitors?

*Mr. Desai:* It all depends upon the conditions.

*R. S. Chunilal:* My position is rather conflicting here, because I am dealing entirely in American films.

*Mr. Neogy:* I should like to have an answer from the point of view of those gentlemen who exhibit foreign films, and not from the point of view of those gentlemen who are already exclusively exhibiting Indian films.

*Mr. Bharucha:* We have shown our preference irrevocably to the quota system.

*Q.* May I know for how many exhibitors who show foreign pictures is the Association speaking on this subject?

*A.* We have got all the exhibitors in Bombay, Indian and foreign, including Madans. But I am not for the present speaking for Madans. Sir, the quota question really opens up a very large issue. What is the quota system in the first place?

*Mr. Neogy:* I should like to know whether you are prepared to accept any condition at all by way of imposing any percentage of Indian films being shown compulsorily in every theatre?

*Mr. Engineer:* I don't like that idea. I am an exhibitor of foreign films. Suppose I show 52 American films in my theatre and if I am forced to show five or six Indian made films, I shall be put to a great loss.

*Mr. Green:* By the quota system it is meant that every theatre shall be compelled to show a certain percentage of Indian-made pictures in a year.



A. Supposing that at the Excelsior or the Empire Theatres in Bombay—these are the two theatres that are exhibiting only American or foreign pictures, and if they were forced to show Indian pictures, then there will be heavy losses.

*Mr. Coatsman:* Why?

A. Because the audiences for whom they cater through foreign pictures won't go there to see the Indian pictures.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* But there will be no other pictures for them to see. There will be no other theatres for them to go to. All the theatres will be made to show those quotas.

A. Then the exhibitors will suffer heavy losses.

*Mr. Green:* You mean to say that if theatres that cater for European and educated audiences have to show Indian films, their theatres would be empty?

A. Yes.

*Colonel Crawford:* What do you imagine is an Indian-made film? Is there any reason why you should not improve the films made in India to suit your audiences?

A. Not European audiences.

*Colonel Crawford:* I saw a film yesterday that might attract and I think with improved conditions you might . . .

A. Will you please name the film.

*Colonel Crawford:* "Tainted Virtue". I have no doubt that it will attract. Your only point is that you are afraid that these films will not attract.

A. No, if the Indian films will be made on the standard of the American pictures and if the Directors or the chief actors and actresses will be from home then perhaps they will be attracted. Unless you have these actors and actresses, I don't think that the high class folk will like these films.

*Colonel Crawford:* What you really mean is that the time is not yet ripe for the introduction of an Indian quota—that Indian productions are not yet sufficiently advanced to justify a quota system.

*Chairman:* Just as the British productions are not sufficiently advanced or as advanced as the American. But it is in order to make it advanced that the scheme is suggested. The object of this quota system, I may mention, is to encourage the growth of the Indian film industry. That is the object. As it is, it is in an infant stage and you know that in England they are taking steps to introduce the quota system as part of the machinery to encourage the growth of the British industry. The object of our inquiry is whether a similar procedure should be adopted in this country.

*Mr. Bharucha:* Confining the whole of the quota to Indian produced pictures. Yes, that system is well accepted by the trade. And on the whole the feeling is this, that unless and until such a quota system was provided for India, there would be no encouragement for the indigenous industry.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* Then you recommend that it should be done.

*Chairman:* Let us be quite clear about it.

*Mr. Bharucha:* The written statement is unequivocal on that point.

*Chairman:* And you know of the British plan to begin with a small percentage in the first few years and go on increasing the percentage as time goes on.

A. 7½ per cent. to begin with, and 20 per cent. in ten years, I think.

Q. So that the object is to foster the indigenous industry. Similarly, do you think such a thing will be useful in this country?

A. I think so.

*Mr. Engineer:* In some theatres it will be useful; in others it won't.

*Colonel Crawford:* Are there sufficient theatres outside these theatres showing Indian pictures to give an adequate market to Indian productions of the requisite standard?

*Mr. Bharucha:* Provided there is some agency, compelling them to have the Indian pictures.

*Q.* We will take it for the moment that certain theatres are mainly attended by European audiences. In those attended by Indian audiences you are already providing them. But the theatres attended by European audiences will want a much higher standard of pictures, a much more costly production. Are there sufficient theatres attended by European audiences in India to give an adequate return on your outlay? If we only say we will have a quota in India for these pictures, does it give a sufficient market for the man who produces them?

*A.* For new producers is it sufficient?

*Q.* If it applies to India only, is it sufficient to give encouragement to Indian productions?

*A.* Yes. And I say it, Sir, with the concurrence of the producer who is sitting at the back.

*Colonel Crawford:* Never mind the producer for the moment. You are satisfied that there is a sufficient market in India to give a return.

*Chairman:* We want the point of view of the exhibitor.

*Mr. Neogy:* But evidently opinions differ from the point of view of the exhibitor. One man doesn't like it at present.

*Mr. Bharucha:* Starting with a reasonable quota system, it is too much to expect that things will be ship-shape at the very commencement—it will take time. There will be a few exhibitors of the kind of the *Excelsior* and the *Empire* and there will be big enough losses at first. But I do expect that unless some such move was definitely taken, the Indian industry is not likely to progress. It cannot be said then that the Indian industry is being helped.

*Mr. Neogy:* Supposing a period were fixed—say one year or a little more, after which such a provision were to come into existence, that is to say the trade and the public were to be given sufficient notice ahead that this is going to happen say a year hence, would that minimise your difficulties?—I am particularly putting this question to those who are of opinion that there will be a falling off and that the trade will be hit. Do you think that will improve your position?

*Mr. Engineer:* No, it won't.

*Q.* Are you an exhibitor to European audiences?

*Mr. Bharucha:* Yes, up at Lannington Road. We get a sprinkling of them.

*Q.* Your main audience is Indian?

*Mr. Engineer:* Yes. We are the same.

*Mr. Neogy:* Madan is the man who is catering for European audiences in India.

*Mr. Bharucha:* Yes, in certain parts of Bombay.

*Chairman:* But is there such a theatre where the audience is mainly European?

*Mr. Bharucha:* Well, a large majority of Europeans.

*Mr. Neogy:* That depends on the location of the particular theatre, presumably?

*Mr. Engineer:* Only Hindu audiences appreciate Indian pictures. Parsis, Muhammadans and Europeans and Anglo-Indians like foreign pictures.

*Sir Hargon Jaffer:* Why not Muhammadans? They would like it very much.

*Mr. Engineer:* But generally they are not liked by Muhammadans.

*Mr. Bharucha:* It is very difficult to attract Muhammadans to Indian produced pictures as a community. They want a certain amount of different treatment in the picture.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* Well, if you will just alter that, it should be all right. I think you don't want them for the present.

*Mr. Green:* Surely, they want everyone who will pay their price.

*Mr. Neogy:* Then with the same object of fostering the Indian industry, if an increased import duty or any other measures which would have the effect of increasing the price of the imported film were to be adopted, how would that be liked by the exhibitor? Either an increase in the import duty or the tariff valuation or whatever it may be—the effect being to increase the price of the imported commodity.

*Mr. Bharucha:* That is in questions Nos. 13 and 43. On that point, as the exhibitors in Bombay have accepted the quota system without any resistance amongst themselves, the question of duty no longer remains in the field. So far as the trade is concerned, this compromise is reached that the quota system if incorporated in India will gain their object as contemplated in question No. 43.

*Q.* So you won't have the import duty increased if you have the quota system?

*A.* And the quota system of the kind we want.

*Q.* Do you think it would be the most effective method of encouraging Indian production?

*A.* It would be, Sir, and here I am voicing the opinion of the producers themselves. Also that of the exhibitors'. The quota system I expect will follow in the wake of the committee's report.

*Q.* And supposing the quota system were not to materialise, would you in that event be prepared to support enhanced duties for the development of the Indian industry?

*A.* Yes, as an alternative.

*Q.* Mind you, I am always addressing these questions to the interests representing the exhibitor.

*A.* The exhibitors of foreign films would be affected by a higher import duty.

*Chairman:* Do you think the quota system will have less effect on the exhibitor than an increased or reduced import duty on foreign goods?

*A.* I think the exhibitor would be better off with the quota system. I think that would be the most convenient form.

*Q.* So as to gain the object we have in view, namely encouraging the Indian industry without much injury to the other industries.

*A.* And at the same time, making proper provision for the public at large also, which, for the present, really clamour for Indian pictures.

*Mr. Neogy:* Turning again to the question as to how far the quota system would affect the position of those exhibitors who exhibit mainly foreign films, have you ever tried running Indian films in any of these theatres?

*A.* We have, and failed miserably. But one explanation may be that we did not keep the Indian picture on sufficiently long; and the other factor that operated adversely in that little experiment is that we did not get the first-run Indian pictures, considering we were in a first-run foreign picture house. So that I won't say the experiment was complete. But it is a fact that if you ask our friends of the Excelsior Theatre to change on to Indian pictures, even pictures of the type of "Sacrifice," it will be some time before the men there will be able to earn anything. But if the committee is anxious to give an uplift to the trade in India and if losses at the outset is a factor which cannot be avoided, by all means let us have it; and the sooner the better.

*Q.* As you have referred to that particular picture, is it a fact that there have been inquiries made about that particular picture from foreign countries?

*A.* Yes, I expect there have been.

*Q.* Then what reason is there for you to think that such a picture will not appeal to European audiences in India?

*A.* Well, it is one thing to classify European audiences in India and perhaps another thing to classify European audiences on the continent. The official community for instance in Bombay are not very much enamoured of Indian pictures. They do not countenance an Indian picture in Bombay. And it is therefore that I have not commented on the picture "Sacrifice" from the point of view of any inherent merits or demerits, but of its relation to the European population in Bombay.

*Q.* But pardon me. Is it the judgment of the European officials that determines the effect of these pictures? I thought the mercantile community never took their cue from the official world of Bombay.

*A.* To a certain extent. Who will you have at the Excelsior but the official world of Bombay, in a large percentage.

*Mr. Green:* Let me say that if you took a census of the Europeans who visit the Excelsior and the Empire, I don't think the officials will be found to be more than two or three per cent.

*A.* They are certainly not in the majority. But there is a European majority at the Excelsior.

*Q.* But not a majority of European officials?

*A.* No, I don't say that. But the European community is in the majority.

*Chairman:* It calls for a radical change of taste—just as it does on the part of the Indian community.

*Mr. Bharucha:* But I want it distinctly placed on record that even the trade-to-day is prepared to face that condition and accept the quota system as a finality.

*Q.* You think the quota system is a very good thing?

*A.* Yes.

*Colonel Crawford:* I would very much like to get from Mr. Chunilal Munim a detailed statement of the members of his Association, the members that he has been speaking for. I think it would assist us to understand on whose behalf you have given evidence. If you could tell us whom you definitely represent under the heading exhibitors, producers, distributors, and importers.

*R. S. Chunilal:* I will send you the list.

*Q.* As exhibitors do you consider that generally—or rather is it possible that your charges for seats to your cinema are too high.

*Mr. Bharucha:* For foreign pictures?

*Q.* For all. Is it possible you might get an increased return if you lowered prices somewhat?

*A.* Our difficulty is, how to raise our prices sufficiently high. If we lower our prices we cannot even make both ends meet.

*Q.* Well, it is better for you to get ten people at a lower rate than five at a higher.

*A.* But then it will be difficult to get people who really matter. There are people who take the view that if the price of admission is too low they will think many times before they enter the theatre—they will think it is a cheap show.

*Q.* What about running special children's performances?

*A.* I would rather not have them. There is nothing in it.

*Q.* Are the films not available or what?

A. Well, there are cinemas in Bombay who have a special morning show every Sunday and it is very thinly attended—a matter of 30 or 35 rupees.

Q. Have you got any natural history films—showing the life of animals.

A. Not as trades people. But I know places in Bombay, for instance, the Hoffkine Institute of Parel, where they have got films of that kind.

Q. A very popular feature of the cinema in England is the shows to which children are specially taken.

A. They do not exist here.

Mr. Neogy: Do you think there is any scope for providing them here?

A. They may form a feature of the paraphernalia of a particular educational institute, but I do not think it is a trade proposition.

Colonel Crawford: As a trade, you don't think people will bring their children to these shows?

A. I have got to keep in mind that I am an entertainer first and an instructor afterwards.

Chairman: You think that if the production and exhibition of educational films in the sense of instruction in any general knowledge and public health were left to private enterprise, it would not succeed?

A. No, in the trade it would not.

Q. But if the Government are anxious to spread public health and mass education, you think the Government ought to undertake it.

A. Yes, we cannot as an institution help Government in that matter.

Colonel Crawford: For instance, in England we know a man takes his child to see a series of films depicting the life of the ant, for example, and the child definitely loves it. It was entertainment for them. You don't think there is any possibility of that sort of thing in India?

A. I don't think so.

Q. Have the exhibitors any difficulty in regard to getting films.

A. It all depends whether they are exhibitors of Indian pictures or foreign pictures.

Q. Well, take the foreign pictures. You find there is no monopoly that shuts out pictures from you?

A. No, I can get my pictures all right. There are no difficulties in the way of the exhibitor.

Sir Haroon Jaffer: But you have to book it long ahead.

A. Necessarily.

Colonel Crawford: Are you a first-run theatre?

A. Yes. And we stick to our own supplies.

Q. Now, can you tell me, supposing for instance, there is a film that Madan buys—how does it affect your theatre?

A. I cannot get it, because they buy it for exhibiting it in their own circuit.

Q. It is not disadvantageous to you.

A. I shall have no disadvantage.

Mr. Neogy: You can get equally good pictures yourself?

Mr. Bharucha: I am sure I can.

Q. So that the so-called monopoly enjoyed by any particular firm does not come in your way.

A. Speaking in the trade, Sir, there are two sides of the market. In the first place, our friends, the producers take the view that it is not much use to them to produce Indian pictures when it is not possible to get Madans to book them. Because Madans are not making up their minds to book any picture from an outside agency. But for foreign pictures I think there are occasions when we can enter into competition with Madans. A company like the Universal Pictures Corporation would be in a position to compete with

**Madans** and that is going on from day to day at Lamington Road. There we have one theatre where exclusively Madan's pictures are exhibited, and the other is for the Universal Pictures. It is a struggle from day to-day, and I think both are doing fairly well.

*Q.* You think it is a healthy competition?

*A.* I think it is. There is nothing in the way of getting ample supplies of pictures.

*Q.* Well, you are quite satisfied? For foreign films, there is no difficulty?

*Colonel Crawford:* The Chairman put you a point to which you agreed that we should adopt as our censorship standard the standard adopted in England.

*Mr. Neogy:* Before you put that question, may I interrupt, because I find the Rao Sahib took quite a different view of this particular point. You said Madan's monopoly affects the exhibitor.

*R. S. Chunilal:* From the point of view of Indian pictures.

*Q.* You have nothing to complain of as regards foreign pictures?

*A.* Not as the agent of the Universal Pictures. I am representing two interests. I wanted to make it clear last time. I have no complaint to make so far as foreign pictures are concerned, but as I was representing this Association I had another branch of the producing line and from that I thought you were asking me general questions and that is why I gave my opinion.

*Colonel Crawford:* The whole of the exhibitors who are present to-day are satisfied that there are no difficulties so far as getting an adequate supply of foreign pictures is concerned?

*A.* Yes.

*Chairman:* You mean to say the bulk of the theatres is not in anybody's hands? It is fairly distributed?

*Mr. Bharucha:* Well, Madan's have the lion's share. 8 out of 18.

*Colonel Crawford:* And as they are buying foreign pictures, it does not affect you at all.

*A.* I must say in fairness to the Indian producers that they have a good lot to say about it.

*Q.* I am not dealing with that just now. Madan cannot do you harm because of the fact that he has got a monopoly and buys all the best pictures?

*A.* Well, I won't say the best pictures. There is a fair percentage of the best pictures still outside Madan's hands.

*Q.* A monopoly cannot break you?

*A.* At the present stage of the monopoly, there is nothing very serious. But if the monopoly goes on unchecked, then they will carry everything before them. There will not be a yard of film that will be imported outside of Madans.

*Q.* Supposing the existing monopoly were to pass into American hands? They might squeeze you. You don't think there is any danger?

*A.* When it comes to a monopoly, I expect a lot of squeezing even from Indians.

*Q.* I am only putting it to you.

*A.* Such a monopoly, if it is carried still further than it is, may be harmful.

*Mr. Green:* You are not quivering in your shoes at present?

*Mr. Bharucha:* Not at present, Sir.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* I think the Rao Sahib said he wanted legislation to break up this monopoly.

*R. S. Chunilal:* For Indian films.

*Colonel Crawford:* Well, the Chairman asked you with regard to the censorship of sex films: it is suggested that we should adopt the British standard of

censorship. Do you think for instance the standard of France would be suitable for India? Entirely from the Indian point of view?

A. I think it would do us no harm.

Mr. Neogy : But first of all do you know what the standard is?

A. It is a bit more advanced than the rest of the world.

Q. A little freer.

Colonel Crawford : My point is that Indian opinion will have its own ideas as to what is morally suitable for India.

A. Well, I say the standard of life as exhibited at present for instance in American films is quite good for India. It is not likely to do us any serious harm.

Mr. Coatsman : And in that opinion you include all classes of audience?

A. Subject to this observation that in Bombay to-day it is very difficult to get the lower class of people, the illiterate masses, to go into a theatre where a social picture of the American brand is exhibited. But even theatres where social pictures of a very high level are shown, I am perfectly certain that not much harm is done or doubtful matter exhibited. I am speaking for the American pictures—I am very definite on that point.

Chairman : What about those pictures going into the inland? Are they sent out to the districts?

A. Foreign pictures imported into India, sent out into the districts? Yes.

Q. When you made that qualification I was tempted to ask you that question. In the city of Bombay they have got their own Indian produced films which they prefer. But how about places where they have not got such an option?

A. Will you mention the name of a station? You mean the far remote districts of India?

Mr. Green : Cities like Surat, Ahmedabad, big mofussil towns.

A. They are very frequently shown there. They are merely enjoyed from the point of view of public entertainment. Nobody bothers about getting a knowledge of specific customs, good, bad or indifferent of the Western Society.

Colonel Crawford : I do not want you to take my questions as in any way of a racial nature. My point is really, what in your opinion as an Indian is suitable for your own people. Would you be prepared to copy us exactly and let your people do whatever we do in England? Would that satisfy you? It is not a question for me to decide, but it is for you to say.

A. It is all a matter of taste. But I repeat that the standard of western civilisation, of morals and of religion, if you like, as depicted in the foreign pictures specially imported from America at present is quite good. No serious harm is likely to flow from an exhibition of those pictures in India.

Q. You touched on the question of crime films. I gather you are in favour of showing crime films. You do not mind what sort of crime is shown on the film or whether the full details of the crime are shown?

A. Not necessarily the details.

Q. Have you any stipulations to make on that subject?

A. In the first place, I should say that "crime films" is not my own word. I copied it from the questionnaire. If I had my way, I know of no such phraseology as crime films. I do not like that phraseology. We have no crime films, but as you have used it in your questionnaire, I preferred to follow that phrase to avoid confusion.

Q. The Board of Censors use the words the *modus operandi* of crime. They suggest cutting out or excising from films anything showing the *modus operandi* of crime.

A. I would say the more ingenious parts of the *modus operandi*. If I see a modern burglar who wants to accomplish his object in the centre of a

room or from a corner, one of the incidents of that crime would be to break open, and enter through, a window. That forms part of the *modus operandi*. You cannot exclude it. *Modus operandi* again is another word with which I have some quarrel. Part of the *modus operandi* might be to enter through a window.

Q. Let me take the specific instance of a film called "The Last Hour" which was shown the other day. In that film there was a part where a woman was trying to arrive at the jail in order to save the life of her sweetheart who was going to be hung. She did not arrive in time and she was delayed. The method by which the delay was brought about was to allow a motor driver to come in her way, stop his car and pretend that the car was not working all right and then he set upon her and robbed her. The whole thing was depicted on the film. The delay could have been explained by a breakdown without this?

A. As a matter of fact, perhaps, time was of the essence of the whole thing?

Q. No, not in that particular case at all. The essential point of the thing was that the girl should be delayed.

A. The censors objected to that?

Q. No. I want to know whether you think that correct. The girl could have been delayed by an ordinary breakdown or a puncture or anything of that sort. Instead of that the producer depicts a criminal act. There was no other point in it except to delay the girl and that could have been accomplished by what I said before.

A. I take it, you have a bit of a quarrel with that part of the story. What becomes of the taxi-driver at a later stage?

Q. He vanishes out of the picture altogether.

A. I would admit in fairness to the reputation of the trade that that portion could have been eliminated.

Q. You would say, not only could, but probably should have been eliminated.

A. It could have been eliminated perhaps with advantage. I agree with you.

Q. Let me come to the topical gazette. We went to an Indian cinema where they had no topical gazettes. Is there a topical Indian gazette produced by Indians?

A. No.

Q. The topical gazettes that I have seen are generally only confined to English scenes, not even Imperial scenes. Are there any International gazettes?

A. There is the Pathe Gazette. They depict from all parts of the world. There is the International Gazette.

Mr. Neogy: Is there any such picture being shown just now in any theatre?

R. S. Chunilal: You can go to the Precious Cinema.

Colonel J. D. Crawford: Your definite opinion is that the topical gazette is not popular with the European audiences?

Mr. Bharucha: I did not say that as a statement of definite fact, but I have come across cases where the gazette is not much liked.

Q. You have heard representations on the other hand that they wished they had had more topical pictures?

Mr. Chunilal: In the instance quoted by Mr. Bharucha of a European gentleman saying "I do not see it," it may be that he may have seen the gazette in some other cinema. Three or four copies are received of each gazette and they are simultaneously exhibited in the cinemas.

Q. Are you convinced yourself of the popularity of the topical gazettes?



*B. S. Chunilal* : Yes. On the contrary they are very anxious to see what is happening in the world.

A. I did not say that there was no general popularity, but it was quite conceivable there would be cases where people did not like them. I even quoted my own instance that I like nothing better than topical gazettes.

Q. There is no Indian topical gazette at present?

A. No.

Q. Are you in favour of such productions in India?

A. Yes.

*Chairman* : You think the Indian producer will produce them?

A. When they come to enlarge themselves a little. It is a question of time and then they will hit upon this project. The only topical we have had recently is about the floods in Guzerat.

Q. Madans produce them frequently.

A. Not for general public purposes. They are not sent to this part of the country.

Q. I would like you to elucidate for us your answer on the quota system. You say, "such quota system should comprise of Indian produced films only, or in any case not less than 50 per cent. of the British Empire pictures....." The first part of it seems to me, if you have the quota system it should only apply to Indian produced films.

A. That is the kind of quota system which the Association has advocated. That is the reason why I wanted to know what exactly was meant by quota system. I was told that the quota system meant the showing by the theatre owners in India of pictures that were made entirely in India.

Q. Why do you go on then and say, "In any case not less than 50 per cent. of the British Empire....."

A. Yes. I had made that reservation.

Q. Are you opposed to any quota system of Empire films at all?

A. I am opposed to any question of Empire protection. I want no protection for British pictures as such.

Q. But supposing you want to get your Indian films a market abroad, how do you propose to do it?

A. How I want to adjust the position of India in the quota system?

Q. Supposing the rest of the Empire takes up the British Empire quota system, under that India has a right to take up the whole of it if the films merit it. You are definitely out to exclude the British Empire pictures in India?

A. Yes, because I am apprehensive that to that extent the Indian pictures will again be at a disadvantage.

Q. Therefore, if there is any British Empire system which is introduced in India, the whole of it should be allotted to the Indian producer?

A. Yes.

Q. There was one exhibitor who was rather frightened by this quota system, being concerned mainly with the exhibition of foreign films. Would it help you if you allowed or retained one theatre for the exhibition of foreign films only?

A. Well, in that case—that is the crucial part of your question, though it comes last. If you take that difficulty to be a genuine difficulty, as time goes on, things will come to settle down and the Indian pictures will manage, protected by the quota system, to create a market of their own in India. But supposing you are going to attach some value to our friend's argument here that there will be some theatres in India, whether in Bombay or other parts of India, for whom it will not be a paying policy to have anything to

do with Indian pictures, in such a case, my contention is that if they are going to be free from showing Indian pictures, they must not be tied down to British pictures. They may be allowed equally to draw from American pictures as well.

*Q.* I only want to know if from the trade point of view you would advocate not applying the quota system to every theatre, or whether you think it should be.....

*A.* As far as possible in everything.

*Q.* You would definitely let the other theatre suffer the loss?

*A.* I say in the beginning they will have to bear some loss.

*Q.* No half-way house?

*Chairman:* Could there be a quota system allowing certain theatres to run without a quota?

*A.* That is absurd.

*Q.* The whole essence of it is that it is compulsory on all?

*A.* Yes.

*Mr. Green:* What about linking two or more cinemas? Supposing you had a gentleman or a company interested in a cinema in the Fort and in one in the north of the island, one can show the western films and the other entirely Indian films?

*A.* That is more or less a half-way house. In that case the quota system is made applicable to the owner of the two theatres and not to the two cinema houses.

*Q.* That is a question of working it out in detail?

*A.* I merely outlined the principle.

*Colonel Crawford:* My point is not to push particularly European films, but to assist the portion of the trade which now makes its living out of the showing of the European films, and I want to know whether there is any method that you would advocate which would assist that trade.

*Mr. Engineer:* In my theatre if the quota system is introduced, instead of Indian pictures I would like to show British pictures in addition to American pictures.

*Q.* You fear you will incur too heavy a loss?

*A.* Not only I. The Madan theatres will also lose something.

*Mr. Bharucha:* At the same time the fact must not be too much stressed that it will be a matter of individual loss in business; because if you are going to give that fact all the importance that you seem to give it at present, there will never come a time when Indian pictures can make any headway.

*Chairman:* Do you think the quota system to be effective can be worked on that basis, on the lines suggested by Mr. Green?

*A.* I think, Sir, that example presupposes that the owner has two different places.

*Mr. Green:* I will go further and say, if you allow two or more owners to combine to work their quota—Mr. A. and Mr. B. to be treated as one for the period. There is some proposal of that nature in the Act passed by the Home Parliament.

*Mr. Neogy:* Not yet passed.

*Mr. Bharucha:* There is very little enlightenment available to us on the quota system. About the proposition of two people joining hands together—it does not seem very practicable. I am speaking of Bombay conditions only.

*Chairman:* Where the same man is the owner of two or more?

*A.* Then it can be worked. In those circumstances nobody can blame my friend on the right that he is not encouraging the Indian pictures, because up in Parel he is throughout the year devoted to Indian pictures only. He is an advocate of the block system. Throughout the year he keeps on exhi-

biting Indian pictures only at Parel. The question is whether he will be let off at the other place from showing any Indian pictures at all.

*Mr. Green:* My suggestion would meet that.

*Chairman:* There both the theatres are wholly Indian. The object is to increase the Indian exhibition and that is not served by it. Therefore it does not help the industry. You seem to readily fall in with the suggestion made by Mr. Green. I want you to think about it and give us your considered opinion whether the acceptance of such a position is going to advance the Indian industry.

A. I will make a note of it and consult with my friends. Where has Mr. Green quoted from?

*Mr. Green:* I will read it when we meet again.

*Mr. Green:* Could the Association give us a list of theatres in Bombay which cater primarily for European audiences. Perhaps I am right in thinking that there are only three—the Excelsior, the Empire and the Royal Opera House?

*Mr. Engineer:* The Excelsior, the Empire, the Wellington, the Precious, Royal Opera House, the Empress and the Royal.

Q. They cater primarily for European audiences?

A. They exhibit foreign films.

Q. No. What I mean is we have been given to understand that in certain theatres the audiences are Europeans and educated Indians?

A. Yes, the Excelsior, the Empire and next in importance from the same point of view is the Wellington. Better than the Wellington but not better than the Excelsior is the Royal Opera House.

Q. Substantially four?

A. Yes. Of course, there are cheaper seats, the pit and gallery, where other people are bound to go. As a matter of fact, that kind of seat is intended for them.

Q. I will put it another way. Can we take it that those four theatres draw the major part of their proceeds from Europeans and the educated Indian classes?

A. Yes, those four theatres.

*Mr. Neogy:* What would be the proportion of Europeans and educated Indian visitors to those theatres roughly?

*B. S. Chunital:* Europeans about 25 per cent. and 75 per cent. Indians.

Q. Even in those theatres?

A. Yes.

*Colonel Crawford:* Now you said Indian audiences prefer Indian pictures. If that is a fact then you need not worry about your European audience at all. The trade can get its profits by showing Indian pictures. The point I rather want to try to get on record all over India is the number of theatres that depend mainly on a clientele requiring Western films. Do you understand me? That is, those cinemas which make their profits from persons who want Western films shown, I want to try and get them. We have been given the names of four such theatres in Bombay. I want to know. You are an exhibitor, you put forward a certain type of programme in a cinema with a view to getting money out of the public. All right, that particular programme is put forward to get money out of a certain class of audience, and the whole of your programme therefore is Western films because this particular class of audience comes for that.

*Mr. Bhurucha:* And it draws, speaking broadly, a mixed class of audience.\*

Q. I don't care whether it is European or Indian, but there is a class that wants European films.

A. There is a mixed class in Bombay which can never dispense with foreign pictures when all is said and done.

**Q.** I am not holding a brief for foreign pictures. I am only trying to get facts. You cater for a certain class of people who require a certain class of pictures.

**A.** No matter, what picture I put on I will get mixed audiences at Lamington Road with a good sprinkling of Europeans coming from the Fort as well.

**Q.** So far as those four cinemas are concerned, if the European audience fell away from them they would fail?

**A.** Yes, I would be affected, speaking of my own place.

**Mr. Neogy:** Would you mind?

**A.** Well, if the Indian industry is going to be encouraged I should not mind.

**Mr. Green:** I will come to that point later. I want to put you another question of which I have had some experience. Customs duty. In your answer to question 13 you have told us the best solution is to have a quota. You cannot say at this stage whether that will be feasible or not, whether we can make that recommendation. Assuming that is not recommended and accepted, I find a little difficulty to understand your answer. The duty works out at Rs. 37-8 per thousand feet.

**A.** It is 4 annas a foot and then 15 per cent.

**Q.** I think you will find it works out to Rs. 37-8 per thousand feet. The actual value of a good film of the class coming in now, will that be more or less than 4 annas a foot, have you any idea?

**A.** I think I had better pass on that question for answer by the importer.

**Q.** Do you consider that the tariff valuation of 4 annas accurately represents the value of the films imported taking the good and the bad together?

**A.** I think Mr. Kooka will be able to say. Mr. Chunilal thinks that questions of this kind had better be put to buyers in the trade most of whom are to be found in Calcutta.

**Q.** But I understand the Rao Sahib represents an important American corporation that sends out many films to India.

**A.** They are imported in Agency and then handled by Mr. Chunilal for exploitation.

**Q.** I am not appealing on behalf of the Customs. Anyway I had better drop that. But you do consider this customs duty which amounts to Rs. 37-8 per thousand feet does not affect exhibitors at all. You say it does not affect exhibitors showing foreign films.

**A.** I cannot say that it does.

**Q.** In other words what they have to pay in the way of other expenses makes this a relatively unimportant factor.

**A.** It would be so.

**Q.** Would it be possible therefore to increase the duty on similar films, foreign films?

**A.** If we are going to continue having foreign films on the present scale then any increase in the customs duty is bound to react on the value of the films as between the importer and the exhibitor.

**Q.** But you say yourself that the present customs duty is so trivial that it does not at all affect the exhibitors showing foreign films.

**A.** To the extent that it may be raised it is bound to.

**Q.** That is obvious. I am trying to see whether it could be raised from Rs. 37-8 to Rs. 50 or even Rs. 100 per thousand feet.

**A.** I am afraid not, because as a community we are overtaxed.

**Q.** Then why do you say it is trivial?

**A.** That may be an item of expenditure so far as we are concerned; but so far as the incidence of taxation is concerned we are a fed-up community.

Q. I was asking to see whether it would be possible to raise finance in order to assist the trade.

A. Taking for granted that foreign pictures are going to come in to the extent that they do now, I am not in favour of it.

Q. I am not talking about foreign countries coming in. I hope to see the Indian industry develop.

A. In that case if there is to be an increase in the customs duty I should expect the trade to benefit.

Mr. Engineer: If the customs duty on foreign films is increased then perhaps the export duty on raw films paid by the exporters of raw films will also go up and that will spoil the Indian industry.

Q. Your second sentence in your answer to No. 13, Mr. Bharucha seems to me to contradict the first. You say, first of all, it does not affect the exhibitor. On the contrary it is highly prejudicial to the producers and exhibitors.

Mr. Bharucha: Of Indian films.

Q. How does it affect Indian films?

A. The argument is this, Sir, that on an imported film the way customs duty is calculated is 4 annas a foot and then 15 per cent. To give a concrete instance suppose an imported film of 8,000 feet costs something like Rs. 2,000 in importing.....

Q. Nothing like so big; it only comes to about Rs. 300.

A. Yes, Rs. 300 for duty; and the corresponding value of a picture produced in India, 8,000 feet length, would be anywhere about Rs. 20,000. So a picture imported from a foreign country having a visible invoice value of Rs. 2,000 has got to pay so little that a picture of corresponding length and value cannot stand in competition with such an imported picture.

Q. This is the point I have been trying to get from you. It does affect, it is prejudicial to the producers and therefore to the exhibitors of Indian films. Then, at present, the customs duty, because it is too low, is bad for Indian films.

A. That is the meaning of the paragraph, yes. But the last three lines are equally important.

Q. I am coming to that afterwards. There are other things on which duty has to be paid. You have to pay customs both on exhibiting and producing machinery, 15 per cent. Is that a considerable tax on the industry or is the capital relatively so small that it is not so important.

A. I think it should be less in the case of this kind of things.

Q. Then there is a duty on virgin films. This will affect producers.

A. If the duty on that is lessened, to that extent there is an encouragement to the indigenous industry.

Q. You are going to have two more producers. Then I will ask whether the duty of 15 per cent. on virgin films affects the trade of producing.

Mr. Desai: It affects it more severely. The other thing to be particularly noted is this that during the War when there was no other make of raw materials coming in, the only material was Kodak and they raised their prices to such an extent that the producers.....

Q. Quite so, we are not in the War now.

A. If you will just hear me out, I will tell you. Prices were nearly trebled and even more than that. Now if you increase the duty on imported films America will raise the prices again on the raw materials.

Q. America is not the only supplier of raw material.

A. The only countries from which we get these films are America and Germany.

Q. Belgium?

A. Not in such great quantities.

**Q.** But they are used?

**A.** Very rarely.

**Q.** You do not think there is a world conspiracy to increase the prices of films?

**A.** I think the best remedy is to cancel all the duties on raw materials for the film industry.

**Q.** Have you ever thought of addressing the Tariff Board which is the authority to deal with a request of that nature.

**A.** No, we have not done it so far and I think if properly worked out you will be able to find out that it is such a meagre quantity that the Tariff Board will not object to it.

**Mr. Bharucha :** Perhaps my friend has not approached the Tariff Board because this is the first time he has been given to understand that the Government is out to help the Indian industry.

**Q.** Well, I come now to another point. Mr. Bharucha seemed to have a great grievance against the censorship because of their lack of co-operation. I gather that he thinks it is impossible for him or any other owner of a film to approach the Board of Censors to get any explanation. That is more or less the gist of the complaint. They are curt and practically give you no answer. You realise that the conduct of the Board is governed by certain rules which have been published?

**A.** Rules formulated by whom?

**Q.** By the Government of Bombay in this connection, the statutory rules made under the Cinematograph Act. Have you ever referred to those rules?

**A.** Yes, in the early days.

**Q.** Well, I will read you just one extract: "Procedure at meetings. It should be the duty of the Board at each meeting to hear any representation from the importers or their authorised agents or from members of the public in respect of the Board's decisions or to examine any representation relating to a film already certified." Have you ever applied to the Secretary or the President of the Board to hear you.

**A.** No. The few references I have made to the Secretary have always given me the answer that nothing further can be done in the matter and that the film is banned for "low moral tone."

**Q.** Have you ever definitely asked to appear before the Board of Censors.

**Mr. Desai :** Yes, we did about the picture you saw day before yesterday and we were told the decision of the Government is final.

**Q.** Not of the Government; it is the Board which decides.

**A.** I put it to the Secretary that I should be allowed to appear before the Board and put before them my arguments as to why it should not be stopped.

**Q.** Was that a written request?

**A.** Yes, we wrote about that but we never received any answer to that. We have asked again and again but they told me the film was stopped on religious grounds and that it was practically useless for me to appear before the Board and that nothing could be done. And I therefore did not want to waste the time of the Board.

**Q.** The Secretary informed you?

**A.** As well as others connected with the Board. I won't make any personal allegations.

**Q.** You allowed yourself to be fobbed off by the statement that it was useless to go on with it.

**A.** Well, it is such a cumbrous process, going round to see the Secretary at his office.

**Q.** He is there every afternoon, and in any case you can always write to him, can you not?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** One other point. You are aware if the Board of Censors bans a film you have a right of appeal to the Government?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Have you ever made such an appeal?

**A.** We have never made any appeal because of this particular film. When their examination is finished they generally let us know what the report is going to be.

**Q.** I gathered from Mr. Bharucha that they are so terribly silent they tell you nothing.

**A.** My experience is of a different kind. I have submitted 50 films to the Bombay Board. Generally they let us know if they have any objection or that the picture will be certified with certain cuttings.

*Mr. Barucha:* That is only recently.

*Mr. Desai:* They take care to inform us to make our arrangements accordingly because such and such a film is likely to be stopped and other arrangements have to be made for the date on which the film was to be exhibited.

**Q.** I understood you to say that you only received a copy of the Board's suggestions to its Inspectors some few months ago?

*Mr. Barucha:* Yes.

**Q.** You were aware of their existence.

**A.** I was aware that certain rules were coming into existence.

**Q.** But you had never actually seen them?

**A.** No, never.

**Q.** But do they make any mystery of those rules?

**A.** To be candid, in the earlier days, we applied for some guidance to the late Professor Louis Peltier and he said they were not for circulation.

**Q.** He died some years ago?

**A.** Yes; and we are very sorry for the event.

**Q.** Do you find any tendency on the part of the Board at present to be secretive?

**A.** Yes. Now-a-days the reply is like this. "I have the honour to inform you that a film called "Straight from the Shoulder" will be certified..... showing the full back view of a naked girl posing as an artist's model is excised and sent to this office." That is one sentence.

**Q.** I put it to you then that if your suggestion is carried out there will be a Central Board for western films only and a local Board for Indian made films. The result will be that you import a western film which goes to a Central Board which might not be situated in Bombay?

**A.** The importers have got their offices in Bombay and so we have wanted the Central Board to be in Bombay also.

**Q.** If they have not, then they must have one?

**A.** Yes, it comes to that. Of course, I quite conceive there are difficulties in the way of any Board of paid officers in arriving at one and the same conclusion looking at the same set of facts in the same manner. So I say that the qualifications must be temperamental. Personally, if I had anything to do with the formation of a Censoring Board, I would certainly not put in it one or two Members of the present Board whom I have in mind. There are some people who can never be fit persons to serve on a Board of Censors, especially I have got a couple of Indian gentlemen of the present Board in mind who seem to have always more solicitude for the sentiments of the Europeans than the European members themselves.

**Q.** Is it your idea that the Members of the Board should be non-official gentlemen serving possibly for a small remuneration or no remuneration at all?

A. Yes. If you go to the High Court, for instance, you have got two panels of jurors liable to serve on the jury.

Q. That is a statutory duty. The law imposes as a statute duty on all citizens of a certain status that they shall serve as jurors when called on. Do you say that to serve on the Censorship Board should be made a statutory duty?

A. I know of many people who are looking forward to the day when they will be called upon to serve as jurors, and you can certainly get gentlemen of status and education who would be willing to serve on the Board of Censors when called upon to do so.

Q. They must be gentlemen of considerable leisure?

A. I know some Europeans of standing. You can keep a list of 100 or 200 people and distribute them.

Q. I am not trying to oppose your views. I am trying to see how it works. I want to see how it would be possible for these gentlemen to work without any remuneration at all or, say, with only out of pocket expenses. A film will then be presented to the Secretary of the Board and an application made for its being examined. The Secretary will then have to obtain orders of the Board, presumably to appoint a Sub-Committee from the panel of jurors. Do you think it will be very difficult for the Censor Board to have the power of the High Court to command attendance of members at an agreed time in a week, or in a fortnight?

A. I am sure such a proposition does deserve a trial. But things must be arranged in such a way that they should be on the High Court model.

Q. May I ask the other Members to say whether they consider this to be a reasonably feasible plan? Mr. Bharucha has suggested something like 100 or 200 members from which sub-committees each consisting of 4 members should be formed in Bombay.

B. S. Chunilal: As far as the Central Board is concerned, it would be better. But the applications must reach the whole Board, and they should not be dealt with by the Secretary alone. They must select their own men in the groups. On the last occasion I also expressed the view that the exhibitor or importer should not know who the group would be which would examine a particular film. There should not be a fixed group to deal with any particular class of films.

Q. This would lead to great delays?

A. If the programme is properly regulated, there will not be any difficulty.

Q. I will give you one example from personal experience. As you are aware, each Sub-Committee of the Board of Censors consists only of two gentlemen, and as we are all fairly busy gentlemen, it sometimes means postponement for a week. If you had to choose four gentlemen, we must first of all look to the panel and then decide which of the gentlemen would see a particular film, but one of the gentlemen may have to attend a wedding or may have to go away to Mahabaleshwar. I put it to you as a matter of practical business, whether you are not bound to have delays in censoring?

Mr. Desai: It will be very difficult, because if one of the gentlemen cannot find time to attend on a particular day, there will be delay, and Indian film producers cannot afford to lose time. If only two Members were kept, there would not be any harm. I do not see any necessity for keeping four members for such a Board.

B. S. Chunilal: We have made a proposal that for the local productions there shall be provincial boards, and there should be a Central Board for all the foreign-made films. The Provincial Boards will be composed of Hindus and Mahomedans, because most of these films interest mostly Hindus and Muhammedans, and they are producing at present about 134 pictures every year.

Mr. Desai: If a Central Board were established to deal with foreign pictures alone, I don't think they will be able to cope with the work because there will be too many foreign pictures. If you can get the services of



Censors, free of charge, it will be all right, otherwise you will have to keep some of these people idle.

*B. S. Chunilal*: If you are going to have paid officials then you will have to restrict yourself to your budget.

*Q.* I am putting it from the point of view of business convenience; not merely from the budget point of view but from the point of view of the whole of India, whether a stipendiary Board of Censors, would not give more satisfactory results?

*Mr. Bharucha*: It all depends upon the individuals you select. I know they are very happily situated in England with Mr. O'Connor. From all reports he seems to be doing very well.

*Q.* He is only a referee?

*A.* He organizes the whole thing. They have four stipendiary censors there to see the films and work for five days in the week.

*Mr. Desai*: If the censoring fees would not be increased it would be all right, but if you going to increase your fee, we would rather prefer a little inconvenience to paying more. If you want to appoint paid officers and the Government is prepared to meet its expenses from some source, then we shall have no objection. In all other departments we are so heavily taxed that we do not think we can bear any more burden under this head again.

*Mr. Bharucha*: On the question of censorship, we have said that we are quite satisfied with the present system. The methods adopted by the present Board are quite satisfactory.

*R. S. Chunilal*: At present if a film is banned, we have to go from one Board to the other because the importers require the certificate for the whole of India, and the contract they make is that if the film is banned for the whole of India, a refund will be made to the importers. The difficulty is, if a film is banned in Calcutta, then we will have to submit it again to the Bombay Board, to the Madras Board and so on. If it is passed by some of these Boards, we shall have to be satisfied with the income that we get from that particular place. From that point of view, therefore, the Central Board for foreign films will be more beneficial to the importers. We can get a refund only if it is banned for the whole of India.

*Q.* A question has been raised about the quota. If I may say a few words explaining what is aimed at in the British Bill, it is this. They desire to encourage the exhibition of what the Bill calls British films in England, British film is defined as a film made in any part of the British Empire which of course includes India. If that Bill passes into law, and it is anticipated it will, then British renters and British exhibitors will have to rent and exhibit in increasing proportion all such empire films. I put it to you, does not that give a great opportunity to Indian-made films being sent to England on favourable terms? They will have to take a certain number?

*Mr. Bharucha*: On that point I would invite the attention of the Committee to the preliminary remarks which the Chairman of this Committee made on the opening day. In which he tried to make it clear that the present inquiry was an inquiry on its own merits and not a propaganda business. There are certain circumstances which so far as the trade is concerned it is very difficult to get away from. I am pointing out now a small circumstance which occurred some time in June or July last when we had in India a visit from a gentleman called Captain Malins who ostensibly was making a tour on a motor-bike throughout the world. The significance of his visit comes in this way, that he seemed to go a little out of his way when he got a resolution passed before the Calcutta Parliament to the effect that the American films were subversive of all morals and religion.....

*Q.* He is in no way connected with this Committee?

*A.* After that came the announcement that a British Syndicate had been formed in England with a million pounds capital and an empire wide scheme. There was also at the same time the announcement that Sir Chimanlal Setalvad was placed at the head of the Syndicate's ramification in India. So all

these three things put together there is some justification for the public to suppose that there is some scheme which will be put forward at the end of this enquiry with which the country, as a whole, may not be in agreement.

*Q.* I hope I shall be allowed to put my questions to the witness, and after that he may be allowed to make his protest, if necessary. I can assure him that I had no intention or anything of that kind in my mind. I have not even yet developed my question. I do not see the relevancy of his remarks at all.

*A.* The relevancy of my remark comes in this way.....

*Chairman:* I cannot say that his remarks are altogether irrelevant.

*A.* Thank you, Sir. There is the public feeling and a large section of the trade is also saying the same thing; so that before the trade is committed to any one attitude on the question of quota, it is only fair to the trade that they get a clear idea of what exactly is meant by the whole thing.

*Mr. Green:* I do not want to make a long speech. What I was telling you was this, that the provisions in the Bill before Parliament, I gathered before lunch, were not fully known to you. I was simply telling you that if Indian films will participate in the benefits of that Bill, I was going to suggest that it would give a distinct fillip to Indian productions especially if you can produce films good enough, because if they are good enough they will be readily taken up in England. This Bill is only applicable to England. I am not proposing that this should be done in India. Does not the Bill, as I have endeavoured to explain to you, give a better opportunity for Indian-made films to be exported to England?

*A.* On paper it appears that by the mere passage of this Bill in England, the market will be thrown open for Indian films, but I am not sure if that would be beneficial to India in the long run. Theoretically it appears that Indian films will have an open door in England, but I am not sure that there will be any appreciable and genuine demand for them in England.

*Q.* I put it to you that if you can improve your productions, what ground is there for suspecting that they will not be accepted in England?

*A.* Even in ordinary matters there are no common sympathies between England and India.

*Q.* You have already told us that negotiations have been started for the exhibition of the film "Sacrifice" in England?

*A.* I expect that negotiations would be started, but I am not aware definitely that such is the case.

*Q.* "The Light of Asia" was accepted in London?

*A.* Not without considerable difficulty. Of course, if the other side made a call for Indian pictures, it might be easier for us.

*Q.* I suggest that the Bill will make it easier?

*A.* I certainly disbelieve that there will be a group of exhibitors in England who will prefer Indian films to English films.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* Do you want that a law should be made compelling every theatre-owner in England to exhibit a certain proportion of the Indian films there?

*A.* If I had seen the Bill, I might have been able to say something about it.

*Colonel Crawford:* I do not think you have got hold of the point exactly. British Empire films do include undoubtedly, films produced in India. The intention is this. Some of the Dominions have also passed Bills affecting their own territories compelling the cinemas in their territories to show 7½ per cent. quota of the British Empire films. Now, there is the opening up of a market to all British Empire films, but whether India will find a way in that market or not will depend entirely on the merit of her films?

*A.* My answer is this. I rather prefer that India should depend upon her own resources, and try to meet her own demand in the Indian market.

**Q.** Do you think your Indian market will be adequate enough for all your Indian-made films?

**A.** After the facilities given to the Indian exhibitors; and if they are compelled to show a certain proportion of Indian-made films in their theatres, I do expect that conditions will be better here. I will go a bit further and say this. Suppose India now definitely commits herself to the policy of participating in what is called the British Empire scheme. For the present we are allowed to produce our own pictures to meet our own demands and needs. But I do not think they are really anxious to have Indian pictures in England. I dismiss that idea altogether from my mind at once. What is the guarantee, I ask, Sir, that the next step will not be the imposing of some condition which will prevent Indian pictures being manufactured in our own country, and the only result of this Bill will be that we will be compelled to have British pictures.

**Mr. Green:** The Bill is not going to be applied to India.

**Colonel Crawford:** The point is, does the producer want an opportunity to sell his goods in the world market? Is it of any value to him?

**A.** The idea undoubtedly looks splendid.

**Q.** If it could be developed, there is money in it, is it not? You say that England won't take any of your films. But I certainly believe that some of your films will have a market there?

**A.** I have very grave doubts about it. You need not accept my statement alone. I repeat that Indian-made films will not have a market outside India. This will be clear from other circumstances also. How many Indian-made articles, let alone Indian-made films, find a ready market in the Empire? I cannot sell a single Indian-made shoe in England.

**Chairman:** Do I understand you, Mr. Bharucha, to say that in competition between England and India, Britain has got more enterprise, more technical knowledge and better facilities than India, and therefore India will not be able to compete with Britain?

**A.** Under the existing circumstances India has a great handicap. A time will come when India will be in a position to compete with England and other countries.

**Q.** But under the present circumstances that is your fear, that is to say, that England has better enterprise, better technical knowledge and that she is more advantageously situated in every respect than India?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Therefore, the provision in the British Bill for a quota of British Empire films will be practically a dead letter so far as India is concerned?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** It is not likely to encourage Indian enterprise?

**A.** Not to the extent that it is sought to be made out.

**Q.** Unless conditions in this country improve, the British Bill will not be of any appreciable value here?

**A.** It will be a dead letter, Sir, as you very happily put it.

**Q.** Therefore, for improving conditions in this country initially, you must have a saving clause in the Bill that Indian-made films should have prior claim so that they may stand on their own legs?

**A.** Yes, Sir. Because it is quite obvious that to the extent that you exclude foreign pictures from the Indian market, the Indian produced pictures must come forward. If by chance we are going to have certain conditions, hampering the production of Indian films, it is just possible that we might lose some of the magnificent American pictures, and then all that we will have will be British-made pictures for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Till we are able to stand on our own legs, whether Empire, American or British or otherwise, I want to select my pictures for my own audiences on merits. If British pictures come up to our standard, certainly we will also have them till we are able to stand on our own legs.

**Mr. Green :** I entirely agree with what you just said, but I have not yet asked you any question.

**Chairman :** Supposing there is a reciprocal agreement between the trade and the Government. In that case we would have our own quota and we would have the British Empire quota. Would you agree to a reciprocal agreement to that effect?

**A. Oh,** I would say God speed to that system. I want a definite and unequivocal piece of legislation. I am not accepting anybody's assurance. So that if there is a general agreement between the various parts of the Empire, and if we take Australian films, say, 1 per cent., Australia should agree to take 1 per cent. of Indian. Similarly for all other parts of the Empire. I have no objection to such a scheme.

**Mr. Neogy :** The percentage you must remember may work out to very different figures in different countries.

**A. And** I suppose when the legislation is being made I shall have a chance to speak again.

**Chairman :** That is all I wanted to say. I wanted him to understand what you were at.

**Mr. Green :** I have no further question, Sir, because you have brought out the very point I wanted to.

**Chairman :** May I also suggest it to you that it is very essential that each part of the Empire should understand the other in a friendly way. So long as we belong to the Empire, it is very necessary that each part of the Empire should understand the other. And so any method which may be devised by which conditions and practices in various parts of the Empire should be brought into contact should be welcomed provided it does not affect each other's interests.

**Mr. Barucha :** Provided the interests of my own country are not subordinated, I have no objection.

**Chairman :** That is, India first, the Empire next, and the world afterwards?

**A. Just so.**

**Colonel Crawford :** Have you any suggestion to make as to how we can get Indian films across on the world's markets. Any suggestion of your own? You don't think the quota system apparently is going to help you?

**A. If** the answer really depended on the merits of the Indian picture, I would have said I expect my pictures to be popular in America or in England. But that is not the only factor operating in the world to-day. Racial prejudices have got to be overcome. There are some people who, if they come to India and see an Indian picture, are bound to like it; but as to getting it across to their own country and exhibiting it there, it is *infra dig.* I think that is my own impression. Whether it is between Britain and America or between America and India or between Britain and India, it is the same old story again.

**Q. Have** you been to the west?

**A. Not yet, Sir.** I narrowly escaped going there.

**Q. You** can only give an opinion.

**Chairman :** You have strong views. Quite right. Nothing like expressing them.

**A. And** I express them in the light of the observations I have made. Those are the three material circumstances that cut at the root of the goodwill which an Inquiry Committee like this should carry in its wake.

**Mr. Engineer :** Now, I want to say something about the "Light of Asia" which was screened there. The "Light of Asia" was directed here by the German Directors and that picture was very popular in India as well as abroad.

**Colonel Crawford :** It was really a question of adapting the method of production to the needs of India.

A. If you want to make out a world market for Indian pictures my opinion is that if Directors, camera men and actors and actresses from abroad will be assured, then there will be good pictures and these pictures will have a world market.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer* : And for that purpose you want Government help, to bring out actors and actresses?

A. Yes, it will be very good if the Government will help over the studios.

Q. Do you want any persons sent from here to England with Government help?

A. Not persons sent from here but we must have persons brought out from there.

Q. Suppose we have scholarships and send men out to be trained there and brought back.

A. That will be all right if these men will come back here.

Q. These very persons after taking their training there would come back and teach the people.

A. No. But just as we invite here to coach the Indian cricketers, English people from there, so we should do for the cinema.

*Mr. Bharucha* : Well, Sir, if it is a question of getting any help from foreign countries.....

Q. I mean scholarships from here?

A. I think there are various other needs of the country which ought to be looked to first and there is a specific question to this effect in the questionnaire. I am not for it. There are other needs of the country which ought to be attended to first.

*Chairman* : You would prefer getting out foreign experts?

A. Neither the one thing nor the other. At the present stage of the cinema industry, as a whole, such interference from Government either by way of spending money or trying to bring out experts is uncalled for. There are other needs of the country which have got to be looked to first. I may go to the length of saying that, so far as I understand the trade, this inquiry is ten years too early. Any money that you waste in exorbitant schemes as a result of your inquiry will not be justified.

Q. You think then the industry can be left to take care of itself.

A. There are no wide or large changes necessary.

*Mr. Neogy* : With the exception of the quota?

A. Yes.

Q. Now, what about the technical training?

A. Look at the pictures we are producing to-day. All we want is a larger organisation, which is distinctly a question of personal initiative.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer* : You prefer that Indian money should go to America? 90 per cent. of the films come from America.

A. You can depend on the people in the trade to do their best for the trade. We have got men of education and social standing like Mr. P. J. Marzhan coming into the Entertainments trade; Mr. Pestonji Kapadia writing up scenarios for pictures, and last but not least, our friend Mr. Taloyar Khan. These are signs of better times ahead.

Q. But that does not help towards the reduction of American films.

A. We are well on the way.

Q. But here is my friend R. S. Chunilal, telling us that 90 per cent. of the films are coming from America.

A. Oh yes, that is true. But I am certain that we are now definitely on the way to put an end to such things gradually. It will take some time. It is a herculean task but the way activities are directed in the industry at present shows that there will surely be a time when the influx of foreign pictures will be very considerably reduced. And the three examples which I

have cited just now show that the right sort of people are coming into the industry.

*Chairman* : You said this inquiry is ten years too early. Would not it be too late when others have established themselves here? Suppose people from abroad, taking advantage of your weakness of organisation, come here and produce Indian pictures, wouldn't it be too late?

A. Shall I take it, Sir, that you recommend legislation of some kind? I do not see, in normal circumstances how it is possible for a foreigner to cut us out.

Q. You yourself say that a large concern has been started in order to produce films in India. What is there to prevent other ramifications springing up in the next ten years and indigenous effort being then too late?

A. But then, Sir, we are moving in a circle. I want to know definitely .....

Q. We are not recommending anything. I want your opinion on that point. You made a statement that this inquiry is ten years too early. Which is better, to expect the problem too early or when it is too late?

A. Of course, early obviously. But if as a result of this inquiry some form of *bona fide* and genuine help is given,.....

Q. But surely you don't doubt the *bona fides* of this Committee?

A. Help for the Indian industry only, just by way of developing Indian films in this country.....

Q. You made a statement which as a public man I have to pay due respect to and therefore I want to put it to you. You made a statement that this inquiry is too early.

A. If the object of this inquiry is nothing else but helping forward the Indian industry to the best of its ability and, as you say, barricading it in such a way that foreign invasion is not imminent, then as I say I accept the inquiry as not a day too early. But as for patching it up here and there in your report and recommendations, the industry can look after itself. My fears are based on the three circumstances I have pointed out. If you are able to take care of those three things.....

Q. We have no pre-formed opinion. We are trying to find out what it is best to do to develop the film industry along healthy lines and in particular to develop the Indian film industry so as to protect it for the present against foreign competition.

R. S. Chunilal : I might say perhaps that in my opinion this Committee is ten years too late. They should have started in 1920. An American corporation were prepared to start a big producing company here then and I stopped them because of the Oriental company which I started. I stopped them coming here. I said let us see to the development of the Indian industry here and since that time they have left the thing to me. The moment I say it, they will start. So they are all prepared to invade India. The moment Government abandon it, they will come here. India has got vast fields.

Q. I am very glad the Rao Sahib thinks it is ten years too late. We want your considered assistance as to what steps should be taken in order to improve the film industry in the country, both in its moral aspect as well as in its technical.

R. S. Chunilal : As far as Mr. Green put it with regard to the quota system, I doubt if it is very clear to us even now what is meant. But, what we want is that in any quota system, India's position should be very clearly mentioned, and that it should be compulsory on Great Britain, Canada, Australia, to take a certain number of pictures from here. At the same time, we have to consider whether we have got such pictures as would be appreciated in those places. We know England is producing good pictures but unfortunately they are not appreciated here. We have given preference to American pictures. We don't get a good audience for pictures made in England. We have tried and imported pictures from England but

they are not paying propositions. Not through the fault of exhibitors or importers, but of the public. There is no appreciation from the public. And for that reason I think that in the quota system our position should be made clear.

Q. India should be satisfied. Or let there be a separate quota for Indian films.

Mr. Bharucha : If that can be achieved.

Q. We have already said that. Let us give the credit of *bond fides* to everybody.

We have now exhausted you as exhibitors and importers. Such of you as take an interest in the producers aspect of the question might perhaps appear together to-morrow. There are some others who are coming.

**Further Written Statement submitted by Rao Sahib CHUNILAL G. MUNIM, J.P., President, The Bombay Cinema and Theatres Trade Association, Bombay, dated the 15th November 1927.**

Referring to your letter No. 252 of 14th instant, I beg to give below a list of Foreign films exhibited in India in which Indian characters were painted in shady colours.

1. Great Circus Mystery (By Germany).
2. Samson of the Circus (By American).
3. Lorraine of the Lions (By American).
4. Hope Diamond Mystery (In the Clutches of the Hindu) (By Gaumont).
5. Palace of Darkened Windows (By American).

**Written Statement of Mr. S. K. NAIQUE, Honorary General Secretary of the Aryan Excelsior League.**

The Aryan Excelsior League has no special knowledge of or connection with the cinematograph industry in India or abroad. The League looks at the cinematograph, not from the point of view of a business proposition but from the point of view of the moral and educational influence. It is sure to exercise for better or for worse, on the impressionable minds of our young generation.

Situated in Bombay as the League is what little experience it has of cinema films and cinema companies, is limited to the cinema theatres situated in Girgaum and Fort. It can safely assert that judging from the prompt and enthusiastic support vouchsafed by the public, the cinema has come to stay amongst us. Its popularity is steadily on the increase. The Indian films invariably draw and attract larger crowds than the English or American films; not indeed because they are intrinsically better or more artistic than the others; but because they are better followed, understood and relished by the general populace, the majority of which is innocent of English. The Indian films have their titles in at least three of the vernacular languages and are on that account more popular. The educated classes, however, owing to their cultivated and better taste, naturally prefer English or American films which have to their credit many points of superiority over the Indian films. The crisp, pointed and witty titles of the American films are features in themselves, and are thoroughly appreciated by the English knowing educated Indians who throng to see these films. The photography is superb, the plot is very elaborately pieced together and worked out and the scenery is grand and gorgeous.

Religious films are the most popular with Indian audiences. Historical ones have also a very strong hold on them. Historical films, if their theme is great, and if they are brought out by well known producers like the Maharashtra Film Company for instance, easily draw bumper houses and have a successful run of several weeks on end; such films for instance as "Netaji Palkar", "The Treasure of Kalyan", "Sinhagad" etc., drew record crowds and left a lasting impression on the minds of those that had a chance to see them. Social films likewise are considerably popular, but unfortunately there is not much variety to be found in their plots. Films that have an educative value are the least popular amongst the Indians and few will be willing to put their hands in their pockets to see them.

There are now so many Indian film companies in and around Bombay, that there is by no means a dearth of films in spite of the fact that they have to supply several Indian cinema theatres with fresh films every week.

The League does think that films of Indian life, topical Indian news, and scenes depicting stories from the national literature, history, mythology and even fiction (for instance the Arabian Nights, the Persian Nights, Gulbakavali, Hatimbai, etc.) would be decidedly more popular with Indian audiences than the prevalent western films bristling with indecent (from the Indian stand point) dances, promiscuous concourse of ladies and gentlemen who seem to be thinking of nothing else but eating, drinking, dancing, singing and last but not the least vehement kissing.

The League cannot say one way or the other whether an increased use of the cinema for educational purposes in schools and for adult education in agriculture, public health, etc., by Government or other agencies would or would not help the growth of the film industry in this country; but the League does think that apart from the growth of the film industry, such an increased use of the cinema would considerably facilitate the spread of knowledge amongst the public at large and would be an important step in the right direction.

The League can broadly say that the credit of the rising wave of cunning crime in Bombay may be laid at the door of the cinema to a certain extent. Some of the detective films are more or less criminally suggestive.

The League is of opinion that censorship in the cases of "sex" films and "crime" films is essentially necessary. Too much care cannot be taken in censoring films likely to offend religious susceptibilities irrespective of all communities.

It is possible, nay probable, that films representing western life are generally unintelligible to uneducated Indians and are likely to be misunderstood by them.

The League which has the welfare of children at heart, is strongly in favour of certification of certain films as "for adults only".

The League is of opinion that children below the age of fourteen should be prohibited from visiting cinemas except for special "children's performances". It likewise thinks that judicious censorship is an effective method of guarding against misuse of the film.

### **Oral Evidence of Mr. S. K. NAIQUE, Honorary General Secretary, Aryan Excelsior League, on Friday, the 11th November 1927.**

**Chairman :** You are the Secretary of the Aryan Excelsior League?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Would you kindly let us know something about that League?

**A.** Yes. (Hands in a pamphlet containing aims and objects and the 26th annual gathering report of the League.)

**Q.** Thank you. How long has your League been in existence?

**A.** For nearly 27 years.



Q. What is the scope of its work? Is it social work?

A. Yes, educational and social. You will find the aims and objects on the third page of the pamphlet.

Q. What is your membership?

A. About 100.

Q. The memorandum which you have submitted was it placed before any Committee or was it your own?

A. By our own Committee.

Q. Was it placed before any Committee?

A. Yes, it was put before a Committee of the League.

Q. How many were present on that Committee?

A. Seven.

Q. And this memorandum was approved by all the seven?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you visited the cinema yourself very much?

A. Yes.

Q. What part of the town do you go to?

A. Specially at Girgaum and in the Fort. Sometimes I go to the Fort.

Q. Sometimes to the Fort but mostly in Girgaum?

A. Yes.

Q. I understand that Indian films are now most patronised by Indians?

A. Yes.

Q. What sort of audience go to the Fort Cinemas?

A. Educated people, and at Girgaum educated as well as the masses in certain cases. Especially in the Royal Opera House you will find educated people and in the case of other cinemas it depends upon the films.

Q. We have been told that the labouring classes do not care for these western shows so much. Is it a fact?

A. Yes.

Q. Is it also your experience?

A. Yes.

Q. There has been a general statement made from time to time that these western shows where they depict sex life more have an injurious effect on the . . . . .

A. At present it is not so. Formerly it was so.

Q. Now you think that things are changing?

A. Yes.

Q. Changing in the direction that they care more for Indians?

A. Yes, and they are showing some cinema films in a nice way.

Q. Do you think there is an improvement in that direction?

A. Yes.

Q. Even among the western films?

A. Yes. And I should give credit to the censors.

Q. You think that the censorship is adequate in that respect?

A. Yes.

Q. You know that people very much interested in the welfare of the country have been reporting that these western films demoralise the people of this country and therefore the censorship should be tightened?

A. Censorship is necessary and the western films are always not . . . . .

Q. You told us just now that the censorship is adequate?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you want more censorship than there is now? Do you want to tighten it in any way?

A. That I cannot say.

Q. What do you mean by saying "I cannot say"? That you do not think that more censorship is needed?

A. It depends upon the members.

Q. You would leave it to the Censorship Board?

A. Yes.

Q. Are you satisfied with the present system of censorship in Bombay?

A. Yes.

Q. You know that the practice at present is for an Inspector to view all the films and where he feels doubtful he reports to the Board. Do you think that that is a satisfactory method, or would you have every film examined?

A. It will be better if every film is examined and seen.

Q. By two or more members of the Board?

A. Yes.

Q. But, of course, you know the difficulty has been mentioned that you cannot get a sufficient number of leisured men of the required calibre to do the work in Bombay?

A. I think if an attempt is made some people will come forward.

Q. What class of men do you think will be suitable for that work? Do you think High Court pleaders will be a suitable choice?

A. That I cannot say. Specially those people who are in the educational line as well as who have a status in social life . . . . .

Q. Can you get such men? It may entail 3 or 4 hours work for at least 2 or 3 days in the week, even having a panel of men from whom you choose.

A. I think so.

Q. You think you can get men in the Bombay City?

A. Yes.

Q. Bombay is a very costly place?

A. There are people who are willing to give their time for social service.

Q. That is why I ask you what class of men you have in mind. It has been suggested that people like retired District Magistrates and retired Sessions Judges and such like people would be the class of people from whom to choose. But what class of people have you in mind that you say you can select men from?

A. Officials as well as non-officials.

Q. Officials of what grade?

A. Specially I can say from the educational line.

Q. What class of people are chosen in Bombay for Justices of the Peace and Honorary Magistrates?

A. We have got as Honorary Magistrates men from the educated classes as well as some from the masses.

Q. Do you think those classes of people will be suitable to be put on the Censorship Board?

A. It will do.

Q. Do you know—I dare say Mr. Green ought to be able to tell us better—how many hours have Honorary Magistrates to devote? Are you one of them?

A. No.

Q. In your League do your members take interest in social work, or is it a mere name?

A. They take interest in that work.

Q. Do you get all the 100 people to take interest in your work?

A. Yes. Most of them.

Q. Have you got a periodical?

A. No. We have got occasional lectures.

Q. Have you got any constructive work beyond lectures?

A. Yes, we have got moral classes for boys and girls.

Q. Do members voluntarily assist in that?

A. Yes.

Q. Out of the 100 members you have got, how many people actually take interest in social work?

A. You will find many.

Q. I am a stranger to Bombay and hence I put you that question. You are unable to say anything on the production side?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think there is anything now seriously wrong with the social aspects of the cinema life in Bombay which requires any radical alteration?

A. Yes.

Q. What?

A. Some Indian films are copying the westerners and there are some western films in which their social life is depicted which according to their standpoint may be right for instance, dancing, kissing, and specially vehement kissing . . . . .

Q. What is your suggestion? Would you exclude such things altogether?

A. According to the Indian standpoint there ought to be some changes so far as the Indian audiences are concerned.

Q. I can understand your saying that the Indian pictures should not reproduce them, but is it your idea that western films when they depict scenes of dancing or kissing should be altogether debarred?

A. Not debarred entirely, but that ought to be minimised.

Q. Just a few minutes ago you told us that the censorship was adequate and would you leave it to the censors?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you got any other suggestion?

A. I cannot suggest just now. It depends upon the nature of the films shown.

Q. Do you think it has a bad effect on the educated classes?

A. I cannot say so.

Q. And as regards the uneducated classes, you have told us that they go to the Indian pictures?

A. Yes.

Q. And what is your fear? I want to get at what you have in your mind about these western films showing dancing and kissing.

A. Yes, amongst the educated classes, when they go, they understand the meaning of it, but those who are in the third class, would go and take advantage of that because they cannot understand it properly.

Q. Who are they?

A. Middle classes, those who have no idea.

Q. You won't call them the masses, but still the middle class people?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think they are likely to be affected by it?

A. Yes.

Q. Although they are educated?

A. Because they have not understood the western family life and social life.

Q. Well, I suppose they see western life in the clubs.

A. Middle class?

**Q.** Would you shut them out altogether? Do you think it is far better to shut them out altogether from these?

**A.** It cannot be possible. In a city like Bombay where we have got a cosmopolitan life . . . .

**Q.** Even Indians are dancing now.

**A.** Those people who are living here—it will not be possible for them to be entirely cut off.

**Q.** Has it got a demoralising tendency on the Indian public?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Do you think so?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Is that belief shared by the member of your League?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Supposing the class of people you have in mind go to any club on a dancing night, you have got dancing nights in Bombay and you have got dancing places in Bombay—supposing they go to these dancing places, you think they ought not to go?

**A.** Yes, If you will allow me, I will quote an instance. Dances which used to take place opposite to the hostel of the Elphinstone College, were objectionable to the students of that hostel and they took certain measures.

**Q.** They are able to look through the window?

**A.** At night there was dancing opposite to that Hostel and they thought that it was indecent and took objection to it and finally it was amicably settled.

**Q.** And the dance goes on?

**A.** Yes, but it will not be seen openly.

**Q.** Although there may be no indecency about it and it may be perfectly proper from the point of view of western society, you would object to Indians seeing that, whether at the pictures or in life?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Do you think that is a view generally shared by the Indian public?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Then you will stop all such films altogether?

**A.** To the Indian public at least.

**Q.** But can you do it? Can you mark the cinemas 'only for Europeans'?

**A.** If such sort of films are there, certain portions should be taken away, for instance vehement kissing and such like things.

**Q.** You object to kissing?

**A.** Kissing and dancing.

**Q.** You seem to be much more conservative than many people. Don't you think that will affect the trade?

**A.** I think so.

**Q.** Do you think the cinemas will be popular if you omit those things?

**A.** I do not know.

**Q.** I thought you believed in the censorship as at present carried on?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Do you think it is not adequately performed in that respect?

**A.** If attention is drawn, naturally they will take more precaution.

**Q.** I dare say you have seen the rules of the Bombay Censorship Board?

**A.** No.

**Q.** Nor their instructions to the Inspector?

**A.** No.

**Q.** I wish you could see them now and if you think any further suggestions should be made, we shall be happy to have them. There are detailed

instructions given to the Inspectors and there are also rules governing the Board as regards these very matters you mention. This Committee would be glad to know whether it is your considered view that such scenes ought to be banned altogether?

A. So far as Indians are concerned they ought to be banned.

Q. Whether educated or uneducated?

A. Yes.

Q. Whether they are England-travelled or not?

A. Those people will be in a minority.

Q. Old or young?

A. Old you can allow, but we are thinking of the young.

Q. But you will have to look at the difficulty . . .

A. I can understand the difficulty.

Q. So I wanted you to say whether you can suggest some solution for that?

A. I cannot say definitely. We have only told you what the general public feels.

Q. I thought I had put you the question, but still, do you think it has produced any bad effects in our society?

A. Yes.

Q. The cinema has produced bad effects?

A. To a certain extent. About 12 years back there was a Zigomar serial and a few years back Eddie Polo. This was a serial and since that time students have been taking keen interest and at night polo sticks were used by badmashes.

Q. That was some years ago. There was a tendency then, and now you say there is an improvement in the western films?

A. Yes.

Q. Still I see you have got something in your mind that really something more should be done. Is it your general impression that something more should be done in the way of censorship?

A. Yes.

Q. Am I summing up your position correctly?

A. Yes.

Q. As social workers I suppose you believe in the introduction of the cinema as an educative factor?

A. Yes.

Q. As regards both social evils and propaganda against that, and the spreading of knowledge, scientific knowledge, hygienic methods and all those things—you believe in that?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think that it should be left to private agency to do that, or should Government undertake that task?

A. It will be better if Government undertake it.

Q. Do you think any private agency will undertake it if left to itself?

A. I do not think so.

Q. So you think that Government ought to do more in that direction?

A. Yes. Perhaps it will not be a paying concern to private agencies. In that connection I should like to show a report the name of which is "Cinema in Education". (Hands in the book).

Q. Thank you. May we return it to you later?

A. Yes.

Mr. Green: I have been very interested in your written statement and also in your oral evidence. You put before us a view which we have

not had developed in much detail so far. I am referring to your view that a western film may be perfectly innocuous for a western audience, but even for an educated Indian audience it may actually shock them?

A. Yes.

Q. You instance "promiscuous concourse of ladies and gentlemen who seem to be thinking of nothing else but eating, drinking, dancing, singing and last but not the least vehement kissing". Must the Censorship Board really regard singing as immoral?

A. Not immoral, but I was giving that as a general impression. They do not follow the idea of the singing. Their tunes and Indian tunes are quite different. They are not acquainted with those tunes.

Q. You are thinking of indecent songs.

A. Any indecent verse etc.

Q. And you cannot suggest a remedy. You do not desire to shut out those films absolutely but you cannot suggest a way out?

A. No.

Q. But you do consider that the standard even of Western films has improved?

A. Yes, I think so.

Q. And that is owing to the censorship?

A. Yes.

Q. Exactly why is it you would like films examined actually by the members of the Board of Censors? Have you any actual dissatisfaction with the Inspector and the Secretary of the Board in Bombay or as a general thing you think it would be better?

A. On general principle it would be better.

Q. And you think you could get a sufficient number of gentlemen? I will put it this way. At present the amount of work in Bombay means 3 hours actual inspecting of films every day of the week. Do you think you would be able to get sufficient gentlemen to leave their homes, go to the place of exhibition, spend 3 hours there, then go back; doing that year in and year out. It would be a very great tax on their time.

A. I think if an attempt is made sufficient number of gentleman will come forward to do the work.

Q. You think you will get people of sufficient standing; that is your view?

A. Yes.

Q. When you talk of educational officers, do you mean serving officers or retired officers?

A. As you please.

Q. Because the man in service you realise, is fairly busy on his ordinary work.

A. Yes.

Colonel Crawford: I too have been very interested in what you say. You are practically the first member of the lay public who has given evidence. You say that Indian films are not very popular with the educated class of Indians owing to their poor technique not yet having improved sufficiently?

A. Yes.

Q. That is your considered opinion, that they are not popular because their technique is not high enough for the educated classes?

A. Yes.

Q. Well now I notice you say here religious films are most popular with Indian audiences. Don't you think there is some difficulty in showing religious films in India?

A. Yes, Sir, I think so; here we have mostly orthodox Hindus.

Q. Your audiences are cosmopolitan?

A. Yes. But religious films are shown here generally speaking, to Hindus, not Muhammadans.

Q. It was suggested by one member of the Legislative Assembly during the debate that religious subjects should be banned altogether.

A. I have said so myself; I have said that in certain cases people's minds are injured.

Q. But are you in favour of the production of religious films for general display?

A. It depends on the kind of film. I am in favour of religious films which will have a good effect, not produce animosity or criticise anybody's religion.

Q. Well, would you suggest any provision or regulations covering the production of religious films?

A. I cannot say so definitely at present.

Q. Would you suggest for instance that no religious films should be produced that are not guided by the leaders of that particular religion? Would you like some provision of that sort made, if it is practicable to make such a provision?

A. Yes.

Chairman: What do you mean by leaders?

A. That is those who are religious leaders. For instance, Christian priests might come and see if they have any objection, or Muhammadan Mullahs or among Hindus Shastris and Acharyas. Lately Dr. Rabindranath Tagore's film "Sacrifice" has been shown. So far as I am concerned I do not take any objection, but orthodox people might do so.

Colonel Crawford: There is some difficulty in the question of displaying religious films. It is very difficult not to find some section who will object.

A. I think so.

Q. But at the same time you would not ban religious subjects entirely?

A. Oh no.

Q. You think there is definite advantage in showing religious films?

A. Yes.

Q. And if it was practicable you would like some sort of supervision by the leaders of the religion itself? If it was possible?

A. Yes.

Q. I come now to the question of Western films. Do you consider the Western films shown to-day correctly represent Western social life?

A. I cannot say.

Q. Give me your impression. You go and see these films in which you say "a promiscuous concourse of ladies and gentlemen seem to be thinking of nothing else but eating, drinking, dancing, singing and last but not the least vehement kissing." Do you think that is a correct impression of our Western life?

A. I cannot say from mere impressions. Only people who know can say.

Q. But what is your own impression. Do you take it as true or not true?

A. No, I don't think it is so.

Q. You take it that it is untrue. Now do you think there is any danger of films misrepresenting races to one another?

A. Yes.

Q. Films may misrepresent Eastern races to Western races and Western races to Indians?

A. It is possible.

Q. Now as regards censorship a suggestion was put forward that India should be satisfied with the standard of censorship in England. Do you

prefer something of that sort or do you think India should set up her own standard of censorship. Do you just want to copy the standard of the West or do you want to have your own ideas as to what will be good?

A. It would be better to follow the standard of censorship in the West and not set up a special standard of our own.

Chairman: You mean for Western films?

A. Yes, because they will give an exact idea of the home life of the West when those films are shown here.

Col. Crawford: But you have objected to certain customs of the West which may be harmful or may not be liked. For instance we may think nothing of kissing in the West, yet you seem to think that kissing is harmful when seen in India.

A. Yes.

Q. Therefore so far as India is concerned you would like to cut out kissing scenes?

A. Western customs are not so much appreciated by us. They may be right according to their own standard but from the Indian point of view many people would dislike them.

Q. It seems to me that as an Indian you would like to suggest your own standard of censorship to judge what is good or not for your own people?

A. So far as Indians are concerned those people who will be on the Board in India will take into consideration the views of the Indians and they will act according to that.

Q. Yes but does India want its own standard of censorship or do you consider the Western standard good enough?

A. Not necessarily the western standard.

Q. You don't think it is necessary for India to have her own standard? Can you give us any specific instances of films which you have recently seen to which you could object?

A. I cannot give the exact names at present.

Q. Well now you suggest that it might be possible to prohibit certain classes of people from going to these films. If you cannot cut out kissing, singing, dancing and drinking you thought it might be possible to exclude certain classes. Would you exclude children?

A. Specially children should be excluded.

Q. Up to what age?

A. About 14.

Q. What about adolescents?

A. They may be allowed.

Q. Would you not differentiate for them at all?

A. No.

Q. Would you certify certain films for exhibition to adults only?

A. Yes.

Q. What would you consider to be an adult?

A. Anybody over the age of 14.

Q. You talk of children's performances. Do you think that the trade could start children's performances which would be patronised?

A. I do not think so.

Q. What sort of films would you include for children?

A. Industrial, agricultural, etc.

Q. Purely educative films?

A. Yes, because in that way they will come to know things which will be helpful to their studies.

Q. From the educational point of view. But would people pay to take their children to such a programme. You don't think children's perform-



ances would pay from an entertainment point of view if such things as Natural History were shown on the films?

A. Yes.

Q. Here you say children should be prohibited except from special children's performances but yet you cannot suggest how you would organise those children's performances.

A. Government should undertake it.

Q. You mean purely educative films to be provided by the Government, not by the trade?

A. Yes, because the trade are not quite sure whether they will get profit or not.

Q. You say "It is possible, nay probable, that films representing western life are generally unintelligible to uneducated Indians and are likely to be misunderstood by them". That is rather vague. In your opinion does it actually occur?

A. Yes among the masses.

Q. You think it is a fact that the masses do misunderstand Western films?

A. Yes.

Mr. Neogy : I find you are an indefatigable worker in the cause of children?

A. Yes.

Q. And your experience has been mainly confined to children of the lower classes more or less?

A. Yes, as well as the middle class.

Q. The poorer classes as well as the lower middle classes?

A. Yes.

Q. May it not be that the views you have just put forward have been a little tinged by your association with children, and that in your views about the propriety of exhibiting certain kinds of films you are influenced by what you consider to be suited for children, with whom you deal? Would it be quite right if I were to put it like that? You are thinking purely of the children's point of view in all that you have stated?

A. Yes.

Q. And I take it that the remedy for the mischief that you apprehend would lie in certifying certain classes of films which you have in mind specially for exhibition to adults only. Would that meet your objection?

A. Yes.

Q. You have no objection to these films being shown to the educated classes and to the grown up?

A. Which films?

Q. The films which you think are not suited for children, they could safely be shown to the educated Indian and the grown up among Indians?

A. If they are worth seeing at all.

Q. Of course it is for them to choose whether they should go to these films or not. Now when you talk about religious films, do you include mythology also?

A. Certainly mythology also.

Q. So there is a certain amount of danger in portraying mythology on the screen, that is your view?

A. Yes.

Q. Even apart from purely religious subjects?

A. Yes.

Q. You are a social worker. Would you object to certain social abuses being exposed on the screen?

A. No.

Q. And you know that certain social abuses are connected by some people with certain religious practices.

A. Yes.

Q. Would you mind these social abuses being exposed on the screen?

A. We have to take into consideration the religious point of view at the time also.

Q. Then do I take it that you think that any subjects relating either to religion or mythology or to these social evils you have to take into consideration the opinion of the orthodox section of the people?

A. No, those people who are concerned.

Q. You, I take it, you are a Hindu and you hold very liberal views on social questions.

A. Yes.

Q. When you say that in such matters we should take into account the opinions of those concerned, are you thinking of people who hold the views that you hold or would you be prepared to be guided by the opinion of those who do not agree with you?

A. Those who do not agree with me, because those who agree with me make no difference.

Q. That is to say, although you yourself strive for the social welfare of the people and the removal of certain social abuses, you would not agree to anything being shown on the screen which might hurt the very people whose social abuses you are anxious to remove—is that the position?

A. Yes.

Q. You said that many things, like dancing scenes, which are depicted particularly on the Western screen are generally objectionable? Do you think that dancing is objectionable even though it may be the Indian style of dancing?

A. In certain cases that also is objectionable. It depends upon the dresses.

Q. So your objection is not so much to dancing as to the particular kind of dress worn by the dancers?

A. Yes, and also modes of dancing.

Q. Then you object to certain modes of dresses being exhibited on the screen whether the particular scene depicts a dancing scene or not. Is your objection really to the present mode of short skirts worn by the Western ladies?

A. Yes. That is the general opinion.

Q. So you won't have European ladies wearing short skirts in the streets of Bombay also?

A. Yes.

Q. On that analogy?

A. Yes.

Q. Either then Indians should be prohibited the use of certain streets which might be reserved for European ladies or European ladies made to change their skirts?

A. Yes. In both cases it is not possible.

Q. So you think that the evil to which you have referred cannot be remedied to the fullest extent?

Chairman: Except by education. Education will be a remedy?

A. Yes.

Mr. Coatman: I was very interested, Mr. Naique, in what you said about the effects of films on crime. I should like to know if we can get your views a little more definitely on that subject. For example, do you or do any members of your League visit the police courts regularly?

A. Formerly there was one of our members who did this. He was an Honorary Magistrate.

Q. You have no regular system of attendance and visitation of police courts?

A. No.

Q. Have you studied the press reports of cases in which the cinema film is alleged to have been the cause of any particular crime?

A. No, but we have got before our eyes typical examples, if I may be allowed to say. Lately there was a case of Babu Chashmawala in the police court. Then it was a case of the paymaster of the G. I. P. Railway who was murdered in a train while he was on his duty. Then I have also read in the press reports about the case of the murder of Mr. Bawla. It is the impression of the public generally that on account of cinemas those people have committed cunning crimes and have learnt how to do them.

Q. But has any case come to your personal knowledge?

A. I have seen certain students have learnt something from the cinemas.

Q. What sort of things?

A. How to hide themselves and become worse.

Q. But have you known of any particular student or students who committed any crime directly under the stimulus of the film or any particular film?

A. I have not, not exactly like that.

Q. Well now, have you any reason to believe that any crime by juveniles, as apart from adults, has been caused by the films?

A. Yes.

Q. Are there any children's police-courts in Bombay as we have them in England, are there any special police courts for children?

A. Yes, on account of that Children's Protection Act.

Q. Have you ever followed the proceedings of the children's police court?

A. I have not.

Q. Have you or any other social or religious body in Bombay what we call in England a court missionary?

A. No.

Q. Who assists the court every day and looks after individual cases and helps children and so on who are accused?

A. I think there are social workers among prisoners but I don't know exactly.

Q. Well now, you said in your oral evidence just now that you have moral classes for boys and girls. What sort of boys and girls attend those schools?

A. Generally those who have got homes.

Q. Not what we call in England waifs and strays?

A. No.

Q. Among the boys and girls attending those classes have you ever had anybody who has been accused of any crime or offence by the police?

A. No.

Q. So you cannot give me any specific instance of it?

A. No.

Q. Well now, is it your impression that the foreign film is the more suggestive in this respect or the Indian film?

A. I say the foreign film.

Q. Do you attend cinemas yourself regularly?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you ever seen any film which you regarded as suggestive in this way?

A. Yes, I have said so.

Q. That was a long time ago?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you ever seen any Indian films with scenes of dacoity or burglary?

A. Not exactly like those from the Western standpoint.

Q. Anyway your general impression is that it is the Western film and not the Indian film that is the more suggestive?

A. Yes.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* You say in your statement "The educated classes naturally prefer English or American films which have to their credit many points of superiority over the Indian films". Now what are these points of superiority from your point of view? To put it another way, what are the defects of the Indian films at the present time.

A. In Indian films so far the scenery and arrangement are not so good. The scenes are not seen clearly and they generally copy the West. The dramas are copied from the West; they have no original ideas. There are a few film companies which have done historical pictures.

Q. And the points of superiority of the English film?

A. I cannot say they are superior.

Q. But you say they have many points of superiority over the Indian film.

A. Well, the scenery is better and they are arranged in a more methodical way and in certain of the films they have scientific and other subjects, which from an educational standpoint are certainly good.

Q. In another place you say "The increased use of the cinema would considerably facilitate the spread of knowledge among the public at large and would be an important step in the right direction." Can you suggest definite ways by which films could be utilised in any way for educational purposes?

A. Yes, they can teach history and geography.

Q. Do you think there is any danger in framing historical pictures which show battles of the past in India?

A. There is no danger if skill is used.

Q. The battle of Panipat for instance?

A. Therefore I said it depends upon the skill. If you show only one side or one party, then there will be danger.

Q. What you mean is impartiality, not skill?

A. Yes, impartial in such a way that no one should think he is the other's enemy.

Q. What other definite ways can you suggest?

A. History, agriculture, and the modes of life of different nations. In certain cases there are botanical films required.

Q. At another place in your note you say the "Indian films have their titles in at least three of the vernacular languages and are on that account more popular." What are these three vernacular languages?

A. Marathi, which is spoken in Bombay and in Poona, Gujarathi, and Urdu.

Q. Have you seen Urdu titles?

A. It is either Urdu or Persian. I cannot read those languages. But I have seen 2 or 3 languages used on the same film. Gujarati, Hindi and Urdu or it may be Persian; those 3 languages I have seen.

Q. You think that Urdu ought to be there if it is not there?

A. Yes.

Q. By putting in Urdu the films will become more popular than at present, is it not?

A. I cannot say that, because there are already three languages.

Q. You say that you can get many workers to sit on the Board of Censors. Do you mean retired men or young men? Would you prefer to have retired men or young men to sit on the Board of Censors?

A. I should prefer to have a mixture of both young men and old men.

**Oral Evidence of Messrs. N. B. DESAI, Proprietor, Sharda Film Co., A. M. IRANI, Proprietor, Imperial Film Co., D. BHAYNANI and B. P. MISRA, Directors of Imperial Studio, on Friday, the 11th November 1927.**

*Chairman* : Mr. Irani, you are the proprietor of the Imperial Film Co.?

A. Yes.

Q. You are the proprietor of the Sharda Film Producing Co.?

A. Yes.

Q. You are the Director in the Imperial Studio?

A. Yes.

Q. You are also a Director in the Imperial Studio?

A. Yes.

*Chairman* : Are these the only ones present to-day?

*Mr. Lohare* : We have a Workers' Association here, which has sent two representatives, namely the General Secretary and the Joint Secretary. I am the General Secretary of the Worker's Association.

Q. Are your interests the same as those of the producers or they are different?

A. They are the same.

*Mr. Bharucha* : Sir, I have got a fresh batch of producers to-day. All the gentlemen appearing before you to-day are from the side of the producing companies.

Q. Have you got any more people from the producing companies?

A. Yes, I tried to get at them, but they left last night. Messrs. Talyarkhan and Gandhi, and they will appear before you on Wednesday next. Out of the 6 producing companies, I have got only 4 to-day, and two are left over for Wednesday. Mr. Irani will be the spokesman to-day.

*Chairman* : It is so very inconvenient if all of you speak together, but if any of you feel differently from what your spokesman says, by all means give expression to that dissenting view at once. Generally the question will be addressed to the leader of the deputation, Mr. Irani, who will answer for the producers, and if any gentleman dissents from what he says, he must give expression to the dissenting view at once.

Now, Mr. Irani, how long have you been in the producing line?

A. For the last 8 years.

Q. How long has the producing industry been in vogue in Bombay?

A. For the last 10 years.

Q. Is it now entirely in the hands of Indians?

A. Practically.

Q. Is it practically or entirely?

A. It is entirely in the hands of Indians.

Q. Have you got any other business in addition to the film producing business?

A. I am also an exhibitor. I have got two other cinemas, the Majestic and the Alexandra. I have also got a musical instruments business.

**Q.** You have got a list of producing places. Are they all confined to Bombay city or there are centres in the Bombay presidency where films are made?

**A.** These film producing companies are mostly in the Bombay presidency. They are outside Bombay. There are some companies in Kolhapur, Nasik and Rajkot.

**Q.** Which is the oldest of them?

**A.** The Hindustan Film Co. of Nasik is the oldest of them. It has been in existence for the last 12 or 13 years.

**Q.** Does the producing industry show a growing tendency?

**A.** Yes, it is steadily growing and it is doing very well.

**Q.** Can you give us a rough idea. I do not want to know about individual concerns—but can you give us a rough idea of the capital invested in the producing industry altogether.

**A.** Each concern has invested not less than 2 lakhs. They have got to invest as much as that, though they may not put in all that amount at once. They may start with a small capital and they will have to go up to at least 2 lakhs. To start even a small concern you will require at least Rs. 50,000, and the smallest of these companies started with Rs. 50,000.

**Q.** Have you any objection to tell us the amount which each concern has invested?

**A.** I can't say anything about the other concerns, but as regards myself, I have invested more than 2 lakhs of rupees.

**Q.** Now, you think that if allowed to develop on healthy lines, this industry will grow?

**A.** Yes, decidedly so.

**Q.** Is there a demand for Indian films?

**A.** Yes, and every day the demand for Indian films is steadily increasing all over India. There is a demand all over India for the Bombay films, and it is rapidly growing.

**Q.** Are more people drawn to this industry or the same people are starting new studios? The number of producing companies has gone up?

**A.** Yes, they have gone up, but the same people are starting new studios.

**Q.** If you prefer to be asked in private about your business aspect, we will do so, but that will be done later on. Now, are the existing film producing companies able to cope with the demand or is there a pressure on them?

**A.** We are able to meet the demand very easily.

**Q.** Are you in touch with other studios in other parts of the country in this matter, I mean in regard to the producing industry?

**A.** Yes, we have to take certain scenes from other parts of India, and we have to go up-country also.

**Q.** Are you making attempts to improve the technique of the industry?

**A.** Yes, everyday we are trying to improve it.

**Q.** I do not know whether it is meant in any spirit of discouragement to your industry, but I suppose you have heard it said that the Indian produced film is lacking in that fineness and finish and in regard to technical aspects which the American films possess?

**A.** We do not deny for a moment that our films are lacking in fineness and finish.

**Q.** What steps are you taking to improve in that direction?

**A.** We are doing everything possible to improve, and we have so far certainly improved a great deal.

**Q.** What I want to know is, are there people in the country who are capable of giving you the necessary instructions for improving the industry?

**A.** We get criticism both from the papers as well as from individuals, and we immediately try and improve our films. We try and improve upon those points on which criticism is made.

Q. Do you think that you have got sufficiently well trained people in the country for directing and training people in acting and so on?

A. As far as Indian acting is concerned, we have got capable people here who can direct our actors and actresses.

Q. Have you got good people who can instruct you in photography?

A. Yes, we have got capable photographers, and they are also trying to improve the photography day by day.

Q. Do you feel the want of technical experts who can improve the quality of your films? I mean if experts are brought out from America or England, do you think they will be able to improve the industry by giving you expert advice and instructions?

A. We shall not be able to pay them if they are brought out from foreign countries.

Q. Apart from the question of payment, do you think they will be able to improve the industry?

A. I should think that our people ought to be sent abroad for study, and when they return they will be able to improve our industry better.

Q. You believe in sending certain people to other countries where the art has come to perfection? What do you think of the suggestion that an expert should be sent for from foreign countries and retained here. Suppose Government sends for an expert just as they have an Agricultural Adviser and his staff, and his services are lent to the producing companies on easy terms or on some terms?

A. In that case we won't mind receiving any suggestions from him.

Q. Do you think you require it? Government are not going to embark upon the enterprise. The point is, does the industry require the services of an expert from abroad?

A. We are lacking in money, but if we had the capital and the necessary facilities, we would have been able to produce better pictures than the Americans and others do. We have of course got Directors, camera men and electricians over here; we are only lacking in materials and capital. By materials I mean equipment like arc lamps, spot lamps and so forth. We can get all that equipment, but where is the money to come from?

Q. Why do you embark upon the industry if you have no money?

A. We start with what little we have.

Q. Now, you say this is an infant industry entirely in the hands of Indians, and you also say that you are not able to find the necessary capital nor the necessary equipment. What do you suggest therefore should be done in that connection?

A. We want Government assistance in this matter, and if they were to lend us money on easy terms on the deposit of certain of our films, I think everything will be all right.

Q. You want Government to lend you money. Are you prepared to give security?

A. Yes. We can give security of our films. We want loans on easy terms, and if Government comes forward to give us financial assistance, I can assure you that many prominent Indians who have surplus money will also come forward and help us once they see that Government is advancing money to film producing companies. There are many rich Indians who are interested in this line, but we cannot get money from them, because the trade is looked down upon, and that is why they don't come forward and help us. There is a sort of social stigma attached to the industry, and people who would go in ordinarily for paying business do not care to go in for this business. There is also a certain amount of ignorance among people.

Q. If you people who are already in the business are not prepared to put in more capital, having regard to the fact that the industry is bound to grow, I suppose non-Indians who are wide awake will come forward and start the industry in this country?

A. Let them start new concerns, but in that case they won't be able to start with their own capital, there must be some Indian capitalists in it.

Q. Why should not an American Syndicate come here and start a big film producing company? Supposing a big American combine comes here, you will all be swept away?

A. I should think that we will be benefited by it.

Q. You are willing then to face competition inside the country from non-Indians?

A. Yes, we are prepared.

Q. Is that the general opinion?

A. Yes.

*Chairman* addressing Messrs. Misra and Lohare said: I understand you do not want to take part in this discussion. If that is so, we will try and give you some other time.

*Messrs. Mishra and Lohare*: We have to voice the feeling and sentiments of the Workers' Association.

Q. It is rather inconvenient that you should come and tell us that now.

*Mr. Bharnani*: We were asked whether we would like to give evidence.

Q. We have very little time at our disposal. I am afraid we may not be able to find time for you.

Q. Now, what is your considered opinion on the point. Supposing a non-Indian firm establishes a film producing business here, what will be the effect of it on your industry?

A. If they work with Indian capital and Indian labour, I don't think we will find any difficulty; on the contrary we shall be benefited.

Q. Why should it be Indian money?

A. It may not be Indian money, but they will certainly require Indian labour, and I don't think there will be any fear if foreign people come and establish film producing companies here.

Q. If any protection is afforded by way of a quota to Indian industry, you are prepared to include the non-Indian concern in it?

A. If the pictures are produced in India, there is no objection to including such non-Indian concerns.

*Mr. Bharnani*: I would personally wish a combine of foreign and Indian interests which will be advantageous to both parties.

Q. The question is rather material, if the question of the quota system for India materialises, it will be very important for India?

A. We entirely approve of the quota system for encouraging Indian industry.

Q. You know about the proposal in England for the quota system?

A. I am not aware of it. But I heard that the law will compel all cinema owners that they should show at least  $7\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. of British films in their theatres and gradually increase it to 20 per cent.

Q. Do you think it is necessary that Government should introduce some such thing in this country also?

A. For encouraging Indian pictures it is necessary, and I think, in order that the industry might grow on healthy lines, such a thing would be very desirable.

Q. Would you say then that every cinema should be compelled, or rather every exhibitor and rentor should be compelled, to show a certain amount of Indian pictures?

A. I should think that 50 per cent. of the quota should be enforced on every cinema owner, I mean 50 per cent. of the pictures shown in a theatre should be of Indian make.

Q. What of the other pictures?



A. If you are going to adopt the British quota of 7½ per cent., then 50 per cent. of that quota should be Indian pictures. What I mean is, that in Indian cinemas we want the full quota, whatever the quota may be. I want that every cinema should be compelled to show a certain amount of Indian films. That will certainly improve our industry and increase production.

Q. As at present situated you don't think you will be able to compete successfully with foreign films?

A. For the present we cannot compete with foreign films.

Q. Supposing there was freedom to exhibit Indian or foreign pictures, and there was no compulsion, do you think the Indian industry will grow under those conditions?

A. It might grow, but very slowly; I don't think it will grow sufficiently satisfactorily.

Q. Now, coming back to the point I had raised, why should not the industry pay a reasonable or moderate fee for an expert from abroad? He may be lent out to studios, and he might teach you higher technique and things of that sort?

A. Instead of advocating such a proposal, we should prefer to send our young men abroad to learn the industry.

Q. Are you prepared to do that?

A. We can certainly do it, but we can't afford to call those experts from abroad and keep them here even if all the film producing companies combine, for the reason that those experts will demand something like 20,000 or 30,000 per month.

Q. Supposing you bring out a man here on contract say for 3 or 4 years to train people here, the industry paying him a reasonable fee?

A. Those experts who would come out here would first of all try to modify our own studios. They would require all sorts of equipment, and they won't be able to work under the present conditions which obtain in our studios. It is all a question of money in which we are lacking. Their ideas of studios are entirely different from ours, and they won't be able to do any work in our studios, nor do I think that they will be able to produce better pictures than we do, because the arc lamps, electric lights and other equipment will remain the same as at present. If we are supplied with such improved equipment, I am perfectly sure that we shall be able to produce better pictures than those people.

Q. As it is your industry requires perfection in many directions?

A. Yes, certainly.

Q. You yourself say you cannot afford to send for assistance from abroad, nor can you co-operate. All of you put together can't pay for an expert?

Mr. Irani: No, we can't pay for that.

Q. Expert assistance is necessary. But what you are afraid of is that experts want more money than you can afford.

A. And we can do without them. We might send one of our men and when he has learned he can come back and equip a studio. And if one studio is equipped fully, then the others will learn and follow suit.

Q. What do you think of the other suggestion that there may be a good central studio well equipped which may be hired out to the producers? Do you think that is a suggestion acceptable to the industry?

A. No, I don't think it is necessary.

Q. It will be a well-equipped studio?

A. But what about the characters?

Q. The characters won't be supplied; but it will be a studio with all the modern appliances and which could be hired by producers.

A. It can be hired by one producer and he can keep it on hire for himself.

Q. It will be hired out to several producers.

A. That can't be managed. Where are they going to find the characters and so on. It is impossible.

Q. I don't think you have understood me. There will be a central well-equipped studio which will be open for hire. Just as a theatre is available. Say any producer wants to produce a film; he pays a certain amount, goes to the studio, avails himself of the appliances there and puts the picture through.

A. In that case we will have to run a double concern. Pay rent for our own studio and for the central studio.

Q. You are talking of your own concern. I am talking about the industry. I am looking forward to the day when it will grow. My point is this. Each of you by yourself is not able to run a studio. You yourself say a good studio is needed. And the present studios are not ideal. If you get a better studio you will be able to produce better films.

A. But every producer must have his own studio. Otherwise there will be no privacy for the pictures produced there.

Q. When you hire a place, why should privacy not be secured to you?

A. Because other producers will be going there also.

Q. But not at the same time.

A. Yes, but the workers must be common. The working staff will be common and then everything will be leaking out and there will be no privacy.

Col. Crawford: Couldn't you take your own staff to the studio? You simply get all the fittings in the studio and keep your own staff, etc.

A. And what about the setting and scenery, etc. Those men will be common men working inside. Or is that also to be taken along by each producer? Then it means that we must keep two studios. It will mean more expense for us.

Chairman: I may say I am not familiar with the details of the thing. But it struck me, having regard to the fact that your studios are so wanting in equipment and other things, that a well-equipped central studio will be of great advantage to the industry.

A. Not individually, if it is on hire. I don't believe in that.

Col. Crawford: What do you mean by equipment? Electrical equipments, etc.? Do you include scenery?

A. Oh yes, scenery and everything.

Chairman: Well, you people must know better. In other countries they have done it.

Mr. Bharnani: Yes, but such a thing is not possible in India. In America you can get a director on contract. You can get stars. You can get the whole thing on contract. Well, that thing is not possible here. Now, if Mr. Ardeshir wanted to produce in the central studio he would have to stop his work in his own studio and take his staff to the other studio. In America if you want to produce a picture, you can produce it; you can get them all on contract. That is not possible in India at the present moment.

Q. Of course, you know more than I do about these things. Why do you think it is not possible?

A. Because we can't get people on contract here.

Q. Don't you think the time will come sooner or later when we can get people on contract?

A. Well, it might come later, on.

Q. If it does not come, how do you hope to compete with foreign films?

A. The only thing is to have a better equipped studio and that requires more money.

Q. Now, you yourself have told us that you are not prepared to put more money into it.

A. We are not in a position to put more money into it. If this industry were fostered, if propaganda were carried on that this is a very sound

industry and the press and influential people took it up, it is quite likely that one might get private capital to come into this industry—the right sort of capital.

*Q.* You see it won't be right to spend money by financing public loans merely to keep up the studios such as they are.

*A.* The studios will improve.

*Mr. Irani :* And we are improving them day by day.

*Q.* Now, supposing there are now 18 people in the production line and they want their studios improved, more money will be required to equip each of them. Whereas public money will be better utilised if it is invested in one good studio which will be hired out on reasonable terms—not necessarily profitable terms—than in lending to each individual producer money in order to perfect his own studio.

*Mr. Bhavnani :* You are right there, but the only question is : can you get extra educated people to carry on these studios? If we can get these people on contract, it will be economical. Otherwise it won't be.

*Q.* That is why, Mr. Bhavnani, I suggest that if the Government take an individual interest in the development of this industry, first of all by providing trained men, secondly by affording facilities by erecting one or two studios where films can be produced, this would be the result you are aiming at.

*A.* Well, I personally believe that if experts were brought from America by the Government, and their services were lent to us on easy terms, it would be a good thing for us. Real experts, of course. I don't mean the sort of people who sometimes come out.

*Q.* Really good experts on short term contracts. A single company cannot afford that.

*Mr. Irani :* But that well-equipped studio won't suffice for the demand of the cinemas which 18 studios are supplying.

*Q.* Very well, you think about it.

*A.* Besides about the settings, it will be a very difficult task. One might apply for a social subject and another for a historical, and another for a mythological; that means the central studio will have to keep an immense property on hand.

*Mr. Bhavnani :* He is perfectly right there.

*Q.* Very well. Is there any likelihood of starting a co-operative society among yourselves?

*Mr. Irani :* That we have started already—I mean of all the producing companies. It is called the Producers' Association.

*Q.* Then what is the difficulty about finance?

*A.* Of course, we are all rowing in the same boat.

*Q.* It is merely a desire to use other people's money?

*A.* One producer has sufficient money to maintain himself : he cannot advance to other studios.

*Q.* I think you admit that a good deal remains to be done both in the way of training people and in the way of equipping the studios. The existing concerns are not satisfactory. And in these conditions it is difficult to expect India within a reasonable time to compete with foreign films?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Well, have you any suggestion to make as regards any other form of help which the industry wants?

*A.* Well, we want more help from the Government. We require Government to help us as regards our needs in the way of troops, horses, railways, fire brigades, submarines, steamers, launches, everything. We want Government to help us in that respect.

*Q.* Are you prepared to pay the actual expenses?

A: Yes, we are prepared to pay the expenses. But even by paying expenses we are not getting that. We want facilities. Suppose we want a hundred or two hundred horses, we can't get them.

Q. Where do you get them now?

A: We go to the Indian States. But we hardly get 40 or 50 horses.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer*: You require forts and palaces.

A. That we can get.

*Chairman*: You think it will be a great help to the industry if Government can do that, and you are prepared to pay the actual expenses?

A. Oh yes.

Q. Well, if you want 200 troops, you will have to pay their camping expenses and the transport of the horses.

A. Oh yes, we will pay—of course, at concession rates. From the railways also we should get a concession. We want the railways to assist us in carrying our people from one place to another.

Q. Concession railway rates in connection with your work? Don't you get it now?

A. No, we don't. We used to get it before.

*Col. Crawford*: Theatrical companies get it.

A. Yes, they get it, but we don't.

*Chairman*: And have you any suggestions to make as regards the duties?

A. We want the duties on our raw material abolished—things like machinery.

Q. Do not other industries also need the same assistance?

A. Yes, but this is a growing industry and Government ought to help us in this respect, at least at the beginning.

Q. On what ground would you justify it? I mean if every industry demands the deletion of duties on raw goods, it will affect the finances of the Government of India very much.

A. These raw materials are brought here for the industry.

Q. Yes, but every industry wants the same help.

*Mr. Bharnani*: I think it is the duty of every Government to see that struggling industries are looked after. We are at present in a very precarious position. For a couple of years if we could be helped.

Q. I suppose you would put it on the ground that this is popular with the public and the public interests ought to be protected by giving them good shows and giving facilities to the producer.

*Mr. Irani*: One thing, Sir. Foreign films when they are sent here are sent very cheap. So our pictures cost us not less than 20,000 whereas theirs cost them less than 2,000. The duty they pay is much less than the duty we pay for the raw material for producing one picture and practically that picture costs us ten times more than the foreign picture costs.

*Mr. Green*: What is the cost of the raw film?

A. One anna for foot positive. And they can be exposed positive for 2 annas a foot. We get only raw material one anna a foot, and we have to expose it and produce the picture which costs us ten times more than foreign pictures cost.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer*: You pay on the machinery too?

A. Yes, on every item.

*Chairman*: Do you think that the present conditions in your studio are satisfactory, sufficient to attract respectable actors and actresses.

A. Oh yes, we are catering for respectable actors and actresses.

Q. I mean what arrangements are made for housing them?

A. We keep the respectable characters in separate rooms and they are quite aloof from the others.

*Q.* I have heard it said that conditions in the studios are not satisfactory enough to attract respectable people to the profession. It means more money no doubt, but unless you make the conditions suitable to attract respectable people, you won't get them to act for you, especially in the case of ladies.

*A.* We are improving daily in this respect and we are also getting a respectable class of girls. Mostly we are trying to get all educated class of people, and in course of time I think there will be all respectable people in this line.

*Q.* You say the difficulty with you is that your cost of production is much higher than the cost of importing foreign films. And if you have to improve the conditions which are admittedly unsatisfactory, your cost of production will come to much more. You want some protection against foreign films. And what is the protection you seek against foreign films?

*A.* That the duties on foreign films should be increased and those on our raw material reduced.

*Q.* And you want loans on easy terms from the Government? Those are the three main points which you approve of? And a quota system?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Of course, you know the difficulties of the quota system. Unless you are able to make a rule saying that you must show, say, a thousand feet of films, if you are not able to produce and supply the whole country, the difficulties will be great.

*A.* Why not? In that case we will try to produce more pictures.

*Q.* They must be of the necessary quality too.

*A.* Yes. When we see we get good returns, we will try to improve our productions.

*Q.* But you are not prepared to put more money into it.

*A.* But when we get the return on these films which are lying idle, we will get more money. That will go to produce more pictures.

*Q.* You expect Government to make a loan to you on easy terms. Then I suppose you would be prepared to give some power to the Government to see that you produce good films.

*A.* No, no power. We don't want any control of the Government over that.

*Q.* You only want the money.

*A.* A loan on certain terms. If they think this thing is worth Rs. 20,000, they will give it on security.

*Mr. Bhavnani:* Well, that is how the thing is being done in America. A certain producer goes to a banker and puts his proposition before him and asks for a loan. That is what should be done in India also. We go to the bank and show them the thing. If the bank likes the film they can give us 75 per cent. or 50 per cent. so that we can produce another picture in the meanwhile.

*Mr. Green:* Don't you want rather financiers than bankers for that?

*A.* Financiers don't come forward in these things. The Government must first come forward and help us in this respect. Then the financiers will see and come forward.

*Chairman:* May I ask a question in that connection? Have you tried to do anything in that direction?

*Mr. Irani:* Yes, we have tried. We have been getting something but very very little.

*Q.* Have you made any attempt to get the Government to finance you?

*A.* No, so far we have not approached the Government. But we think it will be of great help to the industry if they can help. The financiers will only give us money on very heavy terms.

*Q.* I suppose you have seen in the papers that a company is being formed to come and start the industry here.

*A.* That also the Government must stop.

**Q.** I thought you do not mind competition.

**A.** Yes, but there should be Indian money in it.

**Q.** Well, supposing some big concern came here and started the industry—it is more than a supposition, a very likely contingency—how would it affect the Indian industry?

**A.** But how are they going to start it—with American money? Then in that case Government should put a check to it, that there should not be only American money but that there should be Indian money also along with the American money and 100 per cent. Indian labour.

**Q.** Of course, they will have Indian labour.

**A.** Then it is all right.

**Col. Crawford :** Suppose these big capitalists offer your actors and actresses double pay?

**A.** Then we will get more actors. They will come forward.

**Chairman :** You think some steps should be taken to see that Indian productions should be at least a mixed concern and not purely an American concern?

**A.** Yes.

**Sir Haroon Jaffer :** Do you find any language difficulty?

**A.** For Indian productions?

**Q.** Yes, there are different languages spoken in different parts of India.

**A.** Yes, that is a serious difficulty.

**Q.** How do you wish to meet the difficulty.

**A.** That is a very difficult question. I do not see how we can meet the difficulty. In most cases we put in different languages in the same films. For upper India we put Urdu and so on. Yes, we do that. We have got to give different languages.

**Q.** This film that we saw "Tainted Virtue" has it gone all over India?

**A.** No, it has not.

**Q.** Do you produce for the whole of India?

**A.** How?

**Q.** Social pictures.

**A.** Oh yes. Our pictures are liked in Bengal and the Punjab and everywhere.

**Q.** I was told that you only produced for Bombay.

**A.** No, no. Our films are sent all over India. Yes, they like them very much.

**Q.** Are you sure?

**A.** We have got actual contracts with them. Now we have got agents at Delhi, at Bangalore, and in Bengal.

**Q.** Have you made any attempts to capture the world market?

**A.** So far we have not.

**Q.** Have you got your agents in all parts of India?

**A.** Yes. But not outside India.

**Mr. Bhavnani :** But we have sold several pictures to Africa, South Africa, and we are trying now at Singapore.

**Mr. Neogy :** Places where I believe there is a considerable Indian population.

**Sir Haroon Jaffer :** I suppose your directors and others—have they any idea of the outside world, what they produce there? Have they been sent outside India?

**Mr. Irani :** Of course, they generally go.

**Q.** How many people of your company have been outside India.

A. One gentleman.

Mr. Bhavnani : At the Kohinoor there is a camera man. I myself have been to America.

Q. One or two out of this whole studio.

Chairman : Perhaps I may read this for your information. (Reads press notice about the formation of a big company to push the Indian cinema industry). Are you aware of that news?

Mr. Bhavnani : Yes, well, I have seen that. But I heard from certain private sources that this is not correct and some of the Maharajas concerned have themselves denied the fact that they have anything to do with it. And I read in one of the papers that the actress whom they intended bringing is not prepared to come. As a matter of fact, she has never been asked to come. It looks as if nobody has moved in the matter at all and that this is purely a press stunt.

Colonel Crawford : We had a witness the other day who said that they were prepared to come.

Mr. Irani : Mr. Niranjan Pal advertised in the papers that certain Maharajahs were coming forward.

Chairman : What is the object of these stunts?

Mr. Bhavnani : Just to interest persons and to make them come forward with their money.

Mr. Neogy : You may be doing it yourself, who knows. (Laughter).

Sir Haroon Jaffer : What do you think of this idea that there ought to be a section in some school or college of science or something of that sort for the production of directors.

Mr. Irani : In one way it would be beneficial. We do not want Government to open that. We may be allowed to do that.

Q. The College of Engineering or of Science is a Government institution. The School of Arts is a Government institution.

A. What sort of professor is going to be there? We want our Indian professors. If foreign professors are appointed it is useless. They won't be able to teach.

Q. Is any Indian professor available?

A. Why? There are so many.

Q. Are they available?

A. They will be available.

Q. Can you name some?

A. I cannot name any. I can give you from my staff one or two professors to teach acting, etc. They can act as professors for Indian acting.

Q. You are of opinion that you must have Indian professors?

A. Yes, with Indian views and Indian ideas.

Q. I have read in a report here that the producers of a film are receiving 75 per cent. of the total takings, leaving only 25 per cent. to the theatrical proprietor. Is it true?

A. It is not true. That depends upon the merits of the picture. Sometimes you have to pay 20 per cent. The most the producer gets is 50 per cent. of the gross takings.

Q. Not 75 per cent.?

A. He will never get 75 per cent. Sometimes he may get 20 or 25 or 30 per cent., but at the utmost he gets 50 per cent. That depends upon the merits of the picture.

Q. Do you find any difficulty in the proper distribution of the films all over India?

A. No difficulty.

*Q.* I was told that some difficulty has been found in the distribution of the films.

*A.* As regards railway, and other things we find difficulty. Again, in some places the Madan Theatres Company have got their theatres and they won't take our pictures.

*Mr. Neogy :* Not in any towns?

*Mr. Bharnani :* There are towns where all the theatres are owned by Madan Theatres Limited and we cannot possibly do anything there. Very few Bombay pictures are accepted in Calcutta.

*Q.* Then, how will the quota system benefit you?

*Mr. Irani :* Those who are showing our pictures are already showing them, but those who are not showing . . . .

*Q.* But if there is legislation on the quota system you will have to take something of the Empire?

*A.* But why? What we produce in India is also British Empire production. We are giving them 100 per cent. quota, those who are running our pictures. In the case of those who are not absolutely running our pictures the quota system should be enforced.

*Q.* And that would force the hands of Madans if there is any legitimate grievance against them?

*A.* Yes.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer :* There was a proposal made by somebody that the operators should be licensed.

*A.* Exhibitor's operator or producer's camera man?

*Q.* Producer's camera man.

*A.* Why? There is no necessity for it. The exhibitor's operators are licensed already.

*Q.* Do you make contracts with the exhibitors for a year or so in advance for the production?

*A.* No.

*Q.* You do not do so?

*A.* No. In our case we have got our own cinemas and we supply them.

*Q.* You are not supplying to others?

*A.* Not in Bombay. In Bombay we are supplying only to our cinemas. We do not supply outsiders.

*Q.* I thought some gentlemen said that they were making contracts for a year in advance in the case of their films.

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Why should they do so?

*A.* For the benefit of the theatrical company, they will make contracts with them that they should supply their production to their theatre. It is for the benefit of the producer as well as the exhibitor.

*Q.* I do not think it is to the benefit of the exhibitor.

*A.* Yes, because he knows that he is going to get his supply from these people certain.

*Q.* But your hands are tied for a year and you cannot go to any one else?

*A.* Why not? One supplier cannot supply 52 pictures in a year. He cannot do that. So they have got to go to some other people also and generally they make contracts with 2 or 3 companies. They show different films also.

*Mr. Coatman :* During your replies to the Chairman we were skirting a good deal round the question of the financing of the Indian producing companies, but we never actually discovered how they are financed. Now take your company. Is the capital in that company entirely your own?

*A.* We have got two partners and we have our own capital.



Q. It is the capital of the partners?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you know of any company that is financed by public subscriptions?

A. No. Only there was one Star Film Company, that was a public company. There is Madans. It has got public money.

Q. That is the only one?

A. Yes.

Q. Has your company or any other company in Bombay ever received any help from the Department of Industries by way of loan?

A. No.

Q. Have you ever applied for one?

A. No.

Q. How many producing companies are there in Bombay now?

A. Six. There are about 13 in the Presidency.

Q. Have you any information about each of these companies? Are they reasonably stable?

A. Well, yes. Kohinoor, Krishna, Imperial, Hindustan, Sharda, all these are stable.

Q. Have you got companies appearing, going on for a month or two and then disappearing?

A. They are not companies. Sometimes producers have come to produce certain pictures in our studio and then they stop producing afterwards. They produce one picture and then they stop for six months and so on.

Q. Are these companies making profits?

A. Yes.

Q. Is there any tendency to amalgamation between the different companies?

A. No.

Q. Don't you think that would be a good way of improving your prospects?

A. For the present we are going to combine ourselves into an association, and later on, we might think over this matter and we might do that.

Q. But hitherto there has been no move in that direction?

A. No.

Q. You say all the producing companies in Bombay are entirely Indian?

A. Yes.

Q. Have there ever been any European or foreign producers?

A. No. There was one. They never started anything. It was closed before it was started.

Q. What about the railway cinema?

A. They are not a cinema. They have got their own men who take certain scenes and send them to us to develop. We re-print and develop and send them back.

Q. They do not compete with you?

A. No. They show, on the contrary, free.

Q. You say that you are both a producer and an exhibitor?

A. Yes.

Q. Is that the general state of affairs?

A. Not in all the companies.

Q. You also have a musical instrument business?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you want to carry on the musical instrument business because the other is not sufficiently paying?

A. That was my first business and that is why I have kept it. I do not attend to it, my people are attending to it. It pays me something for my pocket expenses.

Q. What about the ancillary industries, that is to say, manufacture of the properties and the various instruments you use, electric light and that sort of thing? They are all from overseas?

A. Yes.

Q. Has there been any production of them in India?

A. No, so far no.

Q. Is there likely to be any in the future?

A. Some people are trying to make cameras and printing machines, but so far they have not succeeded. Later on, I think, they might succeed in producing Indian cameras.

Q. You, of course, would like to see this industry started?

A. We would be the first people to go in for it.

Q. Of course, this is really a hypothetical question, but supposing there is a big development in your producing business within the next few years, would you be prepared to launch out into this collateral business of producing the properties, instruments and so on?

A. Certainly. In that case we would require our own property.

Q. But for the present they are not produced?

A. No.

Q. There are a number of cinema theatres in India, roughly between 300 and 400, I think it is 350. Have you any idea as to how that figure has varied from time to time?

A. Yes.

Q. I suppose it is greater than it was five years ago?

A. Yes.

Q. Is the number of cinema theatres growing rapidly?

A. No. Very slowly.

Q. But is there any tendency towards increased rapidity?

A. Not for the present.

Q. In fact, it is more or less stagnant?

A. Yes.

Q. Of course, when one thinks of the distribution of the Indian population, one realises that it is very difficult to get 15,000 cinema theatres as we have in England, but taking the sort of town that you get all over India in every district, a town of 6,000 or 7,000 or 8,000 people—what about the chances of opening cinema theatres there?

A. No chance. And if people open a cinema there, we won't give the film, because the man won't be able to pay us the rent. On the contrary he will close it down because he will not be able to make even Rs. 20 or Rs. 30 a day.

Q. What is the minimum size of a town in which you think it would be profitable to open a cinema?

A. At least 25,000 people.

Q. What about travelling cinemas?

A. They have got their own films. They produce certain films, and whatever they may be, they go on repeating the same film over and over again and they have not got to pay anything. They have merely to carry the machine, pitch a tent and do the business. They stay in one place and if it is not paying, then they remove to some other place, and in this way they carry on.

Q. Are there many of these travelling cinemas.

A. No. Formerly there were, but now they are few.

Q. What is the reason for that?

A. Wherever we have big towns there are cinemas and they cannot go there. And in the smaller towns they do not make money.

Q. Would it pay in a town of 6 or 7 thousand?

A. It would pay them from hand to mouth, but there will be nothing in the net result.

Q. About the demand in India for Indian made films, you think that that demand is not likely to experience any great or sudden development?

Mr. Bhavnani: I think it is likely. At the present moment we have not got a sufficient picture supply. We want more pictures. There are certain theatres in big cities running a certain film for 2 or 3 weeks continuously because they cannot get them. Otherwise they would have a change every 2 or 3 days.

Q. That is the point I wanted to get at. As a matter of fact, if you could produce 2 or 3 or 5 times as many films as you are producing now, you could sell them?

Mr. Irani: Yes.

Mr. Bhavnani: Surely.

Q. You said that the Bombay products go all over India?

Mr. Irani: Yes.

Q. And you have got your agencies all over India?

A. Yes.

Q. What is your most popular or one of your most popular films?

A. "Aladin and the Wonderful Lamp."

Q. Were the actors in that film Bombay people?

A. All Bombay people.

Q. But, of course, they were in costumes of the period?

A. Yes.

Q. So that it would be popular in Bengal or the Punjab?

A. Wherever it is sent it is popular.

Q. Suppose you produce a mythological film, or better still, a film of comedy in Bombay with Bombay people, do you think it would sell in the Punjab?

A. Yes. If they are put in their language I think they are appreciated.

Q. You go all over India to shoot your film. Do you take your actors and actresses with you?

A. Yes. We have got to carry them.

Q. I suppose hitherto in producing films you confined your attention to catering for Indians. You did not care to cater for European audiences or for British troops?

A. Mostly for Indians.

Q. Provided you could attract capital and the right kind of actors and actresses, you would be prepared to cater for Europeans?

A. Yes.

Q. Could you produce films of the western type?

A. Yes.

Q. You said you do not want to get experts from outside India at your own expense.

A. No.

Q. And you prefer to send your men abroad?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you ever sent any abroad?

A. No. Up till now we have not.

**Q.** Has anybody else?

**A.** No.

**Q.** Would you think it would be a good thing for the Government to give state scholarships for men to go?

**A.** Yes, it would be very good.

**Q.** At present do you think it is any good your thinking of a foreign market? Could you produce now, or have you produced, a film of suitable technique and subject to be shown in England or America?

**A.** No. We can produce, but so far we have not produced. We have not tried it yet. We might make some picture which will appeal to them. But up till now we have not tried it.

**Q.** And as you were saying, you need more advanced appliances and that sort of thing, and more money. I will touch on one more subject and that is the matter of Government assistance. You mentioned certain ways in which Government could help.

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Have you ever thought of other ways in which the Government authorities could help to provide a market for you? I am thinking now not of assistance in money or anything like that by the Central Government. I am thinking of the provinces. As you know, since the reforms there has been a steadily increasing expenditure on education, particularly primary education, agriculture and so on. Don't you think that provincial ministers in charge of education, provincial ministers in charge of agriculture and so on could aid in developing this side?

**A.** Yes. If they give us an order for producing a certain amount of educational pictures and force the colleges and other institutions to show those pictures, in that case we will benefit.

**Q.** How would you like that to be done? Would you like to produce the picture to their order and sell it outright?

**A.** We will sell it outright. They may give us a certain subject and, if they like, they may even give their own scenario and we will produce the pictures.

**Q.** Then you would like such co-operation on the part of the provincial ministers?

**A.** Yes.

**Mr. Neogy:** Has the Department of Industries of the Government of Bombay ever cared to inspect your studios or made any enquiries about the new industry that you have started?

**A.** No.

**Q.** Has any other department of Government taken any interest in your business?

**A.** Only in the case of the License for the Film Storing Department, and nobody else. (Laughter.)

**Q.** Have you ever approached any department of Government for any sort of assistance?

**A.** No. So far, no. Once we had to approach the Port Trust for launches and in that case they were good enough to oblige us by giving us two launches.

**Q.** So far you have no complaint to make against Government because you have not yourself approached them for any assistance?

**A.** No. We know that if we approach them we won't be heard. Even if they heard us they won't be quick and we cannot afford to wait.

**Q.** Do you think that Government's traditional red-tapeism would delay matters?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And you would not be helped, that is your fear?

**A.** Yes.

*Chairman :* That shows you do not make out your programme sufficiently in advance.

*Mr. Neogy :* Then on the question of bringing out technical experts at Government's expense and lending out their services to you, you said you won't mind it?

A. Yes.

Q. What particular qualifications would you look forward to in an expert like that? In what particular branches would you require his assistance?

A. In photography, then lighting effects, and things artistic.

Q. Is that all?

A. Yes, that is all and nothing else.

Q. Is it your experience that one expert combines generally all these various qualifications?

A. No.

Q. How many experts do you think you would require? How many and in what branches?

A. These branches.

Q. One in each?

A. Yes.

Q. You said that you cannot afford to bring out experts yourselves. When you say that, perhaps you have some approximate idea about the cost. What do you think it would cost you, or the Government, to get the services of experts whose services are worth getting from your point of view?

A. If they are really experts, of course, they will not come on less than Rs. 20,000 a month each.

*Mr. Bharnani :* I think you could get cheaper German experts.

*Mr. Irani :* They might ask Rs. 10,000. In America they are getting 3,500 or 4,000 dollars a week.

Q. Do you think it would be much better for the Government to send out Indians to learn the art abroad?

A. Yes.

Q. And under the best auspices?

A. Yes.

Q. I think you are of opinion that it is not possible for even the Government to reproduce in India the facilities and the equipments which the best equipped studios have in America?

A. Yes.

Q. And therefore it will perhaps be an advantage, in your opinion, for our young men to go and visit those places?

A. Yes.

Q. And study under the best experts?

A. Yes.

Q. Then, coming to the question of a Central Studio, you said that it would be very difficult to maintain secrecy of the subjects, of the scenario and of various other things, if you were to take advantage of a Central Studio. I want to understand quite clearly as to whether you think that in case you have a Central Studio your individual studios would have to be maintained along with it?

A. Yes.

Q. So you think that it would perhaps duplicate expenditure on staff, machinery, etc.?

A. Yes.

Q. What is exactly meant by a studio? What are the necessary appurtenances of a studio?

A. Studio means everything, camera, printing machine, developing of the materials, staff, scenery.

Q. I thought when the Chairman put that question he had in mind a studio with all the mechanical fittings only?

A. What about settings and scenery and paintings and furniture?

Q. You require separate scenery and separate fittings for each particular piece?

A. Yes.

Q. Specially devised for that particular piece?

A. Yes.

Q. And you say it won't therefore do for you to take advantage of any Central Studio for the purpose of getting appropriate scenes?

A. Yes.

Q. What proportion of the pictures roughly do you generally have to take, say, in the open, or outside your studio? Not every picture is taken in the studio?

A. No.

Q. You shoot your pictures in the open air also?

A. Yes.

Q. And that is essential. Even if you had the best equipment in a studio you would not be able to do without shooting in the open air.

A. No.

Q. How many pictures do you think it will be possible to take—supposing you had a central studio established by Government, how many pictures by different concerns would it be possible to take simultaneously.

A. That depends on the size of the studio.

Q. So you do not think it is practical politics?

A. Quite impossible.

Mr. Bhavnani: Provided it is a really well-equipped studio big enough to have 5 or 6 companies working together in it. In the Star Cinema studio for instance 12 companies can work at the same time. If a studio of that kind could be set up, I think it would be very easy for the various companies to come together.

Mr. Green: But the cost of that would be too great.

A. Yes, the cost would be very great. The cost of what the President called a well-equipped studio would run to many lakhs, at least a crore of rupees I should think.

Mr. Neogy: I do not know whether you will agree to answer the question I am going to put to you; but is there much of professional jealousy and competition among producers which might militate against the utility of a central studio such as has been suggested by the Chairman?

Mr. Irani: No.

Q. I find that there is some misapprehension perhaps on one point, so far as Mr. Irani is concerned, because I understood him to say in the beginning that he won't mind if concerns were started wholly with foreign capital.

A. Not wholly, but half.

Q. Later perhaps you corrected your first statement. Are you aware of the provisions of the Bill which is just now before Parliament?

Chairman: He says he has not even seen it.

Mr. Neogy: You say that you get whatever facilities you want from the different States. Which of the States have you tried so far?

A. Only two States so far, Baroda and Palanpur.

Q. Do they charge for the facilities they provide?

A. Yes, we pay.

*Q.* Are the charges exorbitant?

*A.* No, very reasonable.

*Q.* Is there any fixed rate of charges for facilities of different kinds?

*A.* At Baroda they have got fixed rates.

*Q.* Perhaps your case would be that, as the Government of India has taken the trouble to appoint a committee to enquire into the present position of the industry, you can very reasonably ask the Government of India to provide these facilities instead of forcing you to depend upon the mercies of the Indian States.

*Chairman :* Do I understand you to say you get them without difficulty from the Indian States?

*A.* You must have influence in order to approach them, otherwise you do not get them.

*Q.* There is difficulty in getting them?

*A.* Yes.

*Mr. Neogy :* Then about the question of the duties you said that apart from the abolition of the duty on raw films you would also advocate abolition of duty on machinery. What kind of machinery do you generally use? Any specialised kind of machinery which the customs authorities will be able to identify, apart from general photographic material?

*A.* Those are the materials we want; and of course there are special machines, like the printing machine, the camera, etc., we want for our work.

*Q.* There are certain special kinds of machinery which are used exclusively for the purpose of producing cinema films, and you think it will not be difficult for the customs authorities to identify those particular machines?

*A.* No.

*Q.* And distinguish them from other kinds of machinery?

*A.* They can easily do that.

*Q.* So if there is a special rate of customs duty or total abolition it won't be difficult to administer it?

*A.* They can easily do it.

*Q.* Could you give us a comprehensive list of the articles on which you think the duty should either be abolished or reduced?

*A.* Yes, I will send you a list.

*Q.* On the question as to whether, if a quota system were imposed, you would be able to supply the requirements of the country, you said it would lead to larger output. Do you know that by the very fact of the announcement of the Government policy there has been a remarkable impetus given to the trade in England and the industry has improved both in its quality and in its output?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* So you are very sanguine that if a definite announcement of the policy of Government in this behalf were made there would be no difficulty if an Indian quota system were imposed?

*A.* No difficulty.

*Q.* Would you like to give some little time to the trade before bringing the system into force. So that although the announcement were made to-day the system should come into operation on a particular day—you would be prepared to allow even that?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* You said that it would not be impossible for you to produce a film which might have a market value abroad. What exactly do you mean? Do you mean that if you were to improve the technique on your films sufficiently, or whether you make a special selection of subjects, or both?

A. Both.

Q. You mentioned "Aladin." Do you think a subject like that would attract audiences in other countries?

A. Yes.

Chairman : Do you think your Aladin film would be popular in Europe.

A. Of course it is a well-known subject.

Q. But your film?

A. It might appeal to them. I am not sure. But if I had money enough I would have produced the picture ten times better than I have done now.

Mr. Neogy : I take it that the selection of the subject is a very important factor in determining as to whether a film will be popular with an audience outside India?

A. Yes.

Q. And do I take it that even for that purpose you will require the help of men, Indians employed in your concern, who have had experience of the Western world and who, apart from technical knowledge necessary for the industry, know something about the tastes of those countries?

A. Yes.

Q. So for that purpose also you would be prepared to advocate a system of State scholarships to which reference has been made by my friend, Mr. Coatsman.

A. Yes.

Colonel Crawford : I would like you to understand that what we want to do is to help the film producing industry in this country and to try and find out for ourselves what difficulties there are in the way at the present moment, and not to pry into your private affairs. The first thing I want to know is: what is the producing trade doing to help itself, the Indian producing trade I mean. You have no co-operation among Indian producers here?

A. We have.

Q. In what way?

A. In every way. The materials we require we exchange. The things we require we exchange. In that way we have got co-operation. We meet each other every fortnight or every month.

Q. That is the Indian producers?

A. Yes.

Q. And you have recently formed yourselves into an Indian Producers' Association which only came into being two or three days ago.

A. We had a Cinema Association in being for some time which included everybody in the trade, producers, exhibitors and others.

Q. And now you have found it necessary, or you thought it might be advisable, to start a producers' association? How many producers have you got?

A. All of them, about 13 or 14.

Q. Could you give us a list of the companies in your Producers' Association?

A. Yes.

Q. I think that would be helpful. The point I want to get down to is the financial question. Could you, without giving away any trade secrets, give me some idea of the cost of production of a film that is a paying proposition?

A. That really is according to the production. It varies from Rs. 20,000 to Rs. 30,000.

Q. Am I to take it that if you produce a film in India costing Rs. 50,000 you can get an adequate return from the Indian market?

A. Yes.

Q. What would you consider an adequate return on an outlay of Rs. 50,000?



A. 10 per cent. to 15 per cent.

Q. And you are convinced that on an outlay of Rs. 50,000 for one film you can get an adequate return of 15 per cent.?

A. It depends on the success of the film; otherwise the Rs. 50,000 is wasted and you won't get anything.

Q. No, well, but if you have produced a good film at a cost of Rs. 50,000 you can get an adequate return?

A. Yes.

Q. What is the average cost for the production of your films? After all the Rs. 50,000 film is a Star or Feature film.

A. From Rs. 20,000 to Rs. 25,000 at present.

Q. Do you think that the producers would let us see some of their returns, I mean their cost of production of certain films and their returns from the exhibitors?

A. Why not?

Q. You might show some of the failures and some of the average returns as also some of the good returns?

A. Yes.

*Chairman* : Supposing a film costs Rs. 50,000 to produce you said that you will get a return of 10 or 15 per cent. and that would be enough. Does that return mean in addition to the 50,000? The film is valueless so that you must get Rs. 50,000 plus 15 per cent., at least Rs. 57,500 on it?

A. Yes, in about 2 years' time we can get back the capital and not all at once. I mean we can get back the 15 per cent. of the capital as well as the original capital, provided the film is a success, because we can make any number of copies from the negative.

*Colonel Crawford* : You said that one of your difficulties in producing good films was finance, but if you can establish to the satisfaction of a good financier that he can get back 15 per cent. on the investment, I cannot understand why capital is not forthcoming?

A. People have not taken the film producing industry in the right sense. That is the reason why we say that Government ought to take the initiative in this matter and give financial assistance, and when Indian financiers see that even Government have come forward to encourage this industry, they will also follow suit. Capitalists in India are generally fond of investing in speculative lines, and if they invest something this month, they want an immediate return on it, but in this industry, as I have told you, you will have to wait for at least two years before you can get your return.

*Chairman* : Surely, you do not get that return in the cotton mills?

A. They must be getting it.

*Colonel Crawford* : Now, taking your failures into account, what would be your return? Suppose I invest 3 lakhs, what would be the percentage of return on my capital?

A. I think you could easily get 15 per cent.

Q. Can you prove it to my satisfaction from actual figures?

A. Yes. Another reason why financiers do not care to come into this line is because the theatres and the profession connected with the theatrical line are looked down upon in India, there is what is called a social stigma attached to it. Many actors and actresses are connected with the theatres, and good financiers do not care to come into this line.

Q. Have you ever tried to float a company?

*Mr. Bhavnani* : Yes, I did try, and I found very few people were willing to come forward.

Q. Had you shown them the details of the figures?

A. I showed them everything, I told them what return they could expect on their investment and how much time it would take for them to get back

their original capital and so forth, but their main objection was that as there would be women or actresses connected with this line, they would not care to come into it.

**Q.** Now, I should like to get some idea of your work regarding the sale of your productions?

**A.** There is practically no sale of films in India. We merely circulate the film and get back the money. The financial arrangement is this. We give them films on a percentage basis and also on fixed hires in small places in the mofussil. When films are given out on a percentage basis, a certain percentage goes to the exhibitor and the balance to the producer. That is the general practice in India in small places. We have also got the fixed hire system, i.e., a certain hire is fixed for the theatres irrespective of the importance of the film. There is practically no sale at all in India of films made here. In England and other places there are what is called distributors and buyers. These buyers buy up the pictures from the producer and sell them outside, because they have got a Trade show and they offer the sale of the picture outright, whereas in India there are no distributors at all.

**Q.** Is that a difficulty from your point of view?

**A.** That is one of our difficulties. If there were distributors, we would have been able to sell our pictures outright, and we could then produce another picture. But we can't do anything of that sort because there are no buyers for our pictures. In England and America there are societies or agencies which buy up pictures outright and distribute them, while we have no such agency in this country to deal with Indian made films.

**Chairman :** Can you tell us what is the cause of this difference? You say there are people ready to buy foreign pictures but not the Indian pictures?

**A.** The cause is the low cost of production. English and American films are very cheap. They also get second hand copies for £20 or £30, while our pictures cost not less than Rs. 25,000.

**Q.** You seem to be in favour of a quota system for India. Can you give me any idea of the percentage of cinemas in India showing western films as against Indian films? How many theatres are showing the western films?

**A.** Nearly three-fourths of the cinemas are showing the western pictures. There are about 21 cinemas in Bombay, and nearly three-fourths of that number are showing the western films.

**Mr. Bhavnani :** There are some theatres which show both Indian as well as the western pictures.

**Colonel Crawford :** The Excelsior is showing western.

Empire . . . . .	Western.
Wellington . . . . .	Western.
Edward Theatre . . . . .	Western.
Alexandra . . . . .	Western and Indian.
Majestic . . . . .	Indian.
Royal Opera House . . . . .	Western.
Crown Cinema . . . . .	Western.
Globe Cinema . . . . .	Western and Indian.
Royal Cinema . . . . .	Western.
Imperial Cinema . . . . .	Western.
Precious Cinema . . . . .	Western.
Empress Cinema . . . . .	Western.
Laxmi Cinema . . . . .	Indian.
Newby Cinema . . . . .	Western and Indian.
Saraswati Cinema . . . . .	Indian.
Krishna and Novelty Cinemas . . . . .	Indian.

The impression is that most of these are situated in the Indian quarters, and some of the witnesses told us that Indian pictures are the most popular. But why is it that some of these hold to western films? Can you give me any idea of that? Quite 50 per cent. of your theatres which are situated in the middle of the Indian quarters are showing English films, though most of the Indians like, very naturally, to see Indian pictures?

A. Six out of 18 only are showing Indian pictures, the rest of the theatres belong to Madans, and they have got the monopoly of western films. If we go on producing pictures, who is to run them?

Q. Would you not get a better return if you showed your pictures for a week?

A. When we know that we can run it in the second week, why should we not? We have a certain limit, i.e., if we get a certain amount in one week from a certain picture, we will certainly run it in the next week also. It is certainly a paying proposition to show a picture in the second week also in many cases.

Q. Now, I suppose you would like to see the quota system introduced in India for Indian films and you would enforce it on all theatres?

A. Yes, I would impose it throughout India.

Q. I have been given to understand that some of your pictures have limitations owing to provincial boundaries, i.e., some of the films made in Bombay would not be worth showing in Bengal owing to the difference in customs and habits of the people. I have heard that statement made, but I do not know if it is true?

A. It is entirely an incorrect statement from the producer's point of view. Of course, it hinders a little but so far as our business side is concerned, i.e., we may not get an adequate return on it compared with what we might get on it in the Bombay Presidency. There is no doubt that people would like to see pictures relating to their own locality, and that of course is a difficulty, and in that sense it may be correct, because a Gujarat picture may not appeal in the Deccan to the same extent as it would in Gujarat.

Q. Won't the audiences begin to fall off with your quota system?

A. That only applies to the social pictures, but with regard to historical pictures there is no trouble or difficulty. The portraying of social pictures will bring the different provinces together. For instance, the customs and habits of the people of the Bombay and Madras Presidencies are more or less alike with differences in certain respects, but these social pictures are bringing the people of these two provinces closer. We would also learn what the Madras people want and what people of other presidencies want.

Q. Can you ensure that audiences will come and see your pictures?

A. I think so, because they will have an Indian picture and they would certainly like to see it.

Chairman: Indian pictures are shown in Madras. May I know if they are produced in Bombay?

A. Yes, they are all successful there. There is no film production in Madras, and our films are extremely popular.

Colonel Crawford: Can you tell me what are the difficulties of production for the foreign market? You want to expand your market, is it not?

A. Finance is the first thing.

Q. Don't you think a fifty thousand rupee film will find a foreign market?

A. We won't be able to produce such films every now and then. We might produce one once in a year.

Q. Can you give me the name of a fifty thousand rupee picture?

A. "Sacrifice" and "The Light of Asia." "The Light of Asia" might cost a little more, because there was a little waste of money in its production.

Q. Do you think the film called "Trainted Virtue" which was produced by you would find a foreign market?

A. I don't think it would.

Q. Have you ever thought of sending a film like that to London for pre-viewing?

A. We have tried a few of our pictures, but they do not like them. We sent "Shahjahan," "Krishna Janma" and some other pictures to London and tried to show them through our agent, but they were not at all liked by people there.

Q. I believe you have not any agent working in London on behalf of the producers. Do you think there will be an advantage if you combine and keep a man there?

A. We are going to do that.

Q. In answer to the Chairman you said that you would like to send young men to the west to learn the art of cinema photography, developing and so forth, rather than bring out experts to India. Have Indians who go to the west any difficulties to overcome?

A. There are a lot of difficulties.

Mr. Desai : In 1921 when I went to England, and there were only 3 studios over there I approached one of them, and the Director of that studio told me that if I could invest £1,000 he would teach me, which I could not do. Then I thought I would go and learn something in America. When I went over there it was very difficult even to enter the compounds of the studios unless you bribed some one there or unless you had some sort of influence with the camera man or some one else in the studio, but there too they would admit you only for 15,000. One can never get a job there, nor can he get himself into the trade in America.

Q. Are there opportunities in England and Germany?

A. I do not know anything about the continent.

Mr. Bhavnani : I tried to get into a studio in England, and I found it very difficult. There was the concern called the Automatic Film Printers. I was more interested in the production side of it than the developing side. They did not care to take me on. They wanted me to invest a certain sum of money and also to accept a condition that after I had been trained, they would send me back to India and that I should organize a studio in India on their behalf. But the sum they demanded was something like £3,000, and it was too much for me. They said they would fully train me up and send me back to India. They said that it would take me about 2 years. Evidently they did not want me, I could quite see that. Then I went over to Germany, and there it was not very difficult. I advertised for a camera man who would take me up as an assistant and that I was willing to pay a premium. I got a man who took me up for £15 a month and he introduced me to several studios. There I made friends and I was allowed to enter those studios. Though I never got any job, I used to go sometimes as an extra man. Sometimes 15 or 20 cameras were required at the same time, and I used to get an opportunity to go and do a little work with any spare camera, through some of my camera friends there. The only training I got there was I saw how some of the well-known experts were directing and how things were carried out.

Chairman : In the place where they asked you £3,000, how much do you think an English lad would have had to pay?

A. I think about £10 or £15 or a fixed sum of £200 for the whole course, extending for a year. But I cannot say that for certain as I never made any inquiries.

Q. What I want to know is if they wanted to make it prohibitive?

A. The Automatic Film Company offered to take me free of charge, and if I stayed with them for six months they would pay me something later on, but I did not stay for very long.

Colonel Crawford : Is it an advantage to the industry to be situated in Bombay or in the mofussil?

*Mr. Irani:* There are certainly some advantages if a company is located in Bombay, because we can always obtain supplies and materials whenever wanted, we can also get actors and actresses without difficulty. But the rent is extremely high. Whereas in the mofussil places the rent is low but we would not be able to obtain the necessary materials whenever wanted.

*Q.* Supposing you were to start a sort of Hollywood, would you prefer to establish it in the mofussil or in Bombay?

*A.* We should have it in the mofussil. It must be somewhere in the mofussil and not in a big city like Bombay. Then there will not be any risk of getting crowds there.

*Q.* Wouldn't you have the difficulty of getting crowds?

*A.* Well, if you are going to have a Hollywood, you must have your crowd.

*Q.* Electric light?

*A.* Everything, I imagine.

*Q.* Now, I go down to the question of a central studio. I rather gather from your answers that you would not be in favour of Government putting up a central studio?

*A.* No.

*Q.* But supposing Government were to erect a central studio with about 6 studios in it—all the electric plant complete, cameras and camera men, all the necessary lighting, carpentering establishment, durzi establishment? Do you think there would be any chance of those studios being rented out by the various producing people?

*A.* I don't think so. The chief thing is the characters, but where are we going to find characters?

*Q.* But I understand you have already rented your studio out to producers.

*A.* With our characters. They are not to bring their own characters. But we supply the characters. We have got our trained men.

*Q.* Would you, with your own characters, rent one of those studios every now and again?

*A.* Why should I allow my characters to go into their studios?

*Q.* But you yourself do not produce the picture. You are only owning the studio at present; you are not producing the picture.

*A.* We are producing the picture.

*Q.* Well, when you want to produce a picture and you have this studio with the very latest equipment and up-to-date camera men, would you be inclined to take your actors and actresses there to produce a picture?

*A.* We may for the higher class picture. But that is also if I get it cheaper than my own studio.

*Q.* But you can't produce the high class picture in your studio owing to lack of equipment at present.

*A.* Well, I might try to introduce a few details of equipment into my studio and try to produce it.

*Q.* But I understand you have not the finance to do it.

*A.* Well, in that case we will try to find ways and means. If somebody else sets up a good studio we will follow suit. If we see there is competition, we might try to find out some financier to help us in the matter. We would not allow our studio to lie idle in that case.

*Q.* Now then, give me some idea of the salaries of Indian actors and actresses.

*A.* Well nowadays we have got to pay more heavy salaries.

*Q.* Could you let us have some figures?

*A.* From Rs. 30 to Rs. 1,000 a month.

*Q.* You consider Rs. 30 a high salary?

*A.* That is for a cooly, a super, an extra.

**Q.** What do you pay your more or less middle characters?

**A.** They get Rs. 200, or Rs. 250.

**Q.** And a star?

**A.** They get Rs. 600, Rs. 700 or Rs. 800 a month.

**Q.** And you have to keep them constantly. You can't pick up a star just for a single production?

**A.** That is not the custom here. Once you have got her you have got to keep her and pay her every month.

**Mr. Bhavnani :** It is difficult to get stars. I think each company has just got one star.

**Q.** Is there a star now by the name of Zobeida?

**Mr. Irani :** She is not in the cinema at the moment.

**Q.** Would she be likely to come for a contract?

**A.** Yes, if anybody comes forward. But she is in the habit of asking for advances. Wherever she goes she wants a thousand or two thousand rupees.

**Q.** Is she a draw from the commercial point of view?

**Mr. Bhavnani :** Not now.

**Mr. Irani :** Yes, she is. But she has got this very bad habit, and nobody likes engaging her.

**Chairman :** You mean this habit of asking for an advance?

**Colonel Crawford :** Have you ever thought of asking people to come and take part in your productions? For instance, have you ever asked Mr. Neogy and myself to come and figure as lawyers or something on your films?

**A.** We have had educated people who have come and sat down as judges and so on, for one scene or so.

**Q.** Do you think that so far as your actors and actresses are concerned, you might do a bit more if you tried harder?

**A.** We have tried very very hard.

**Q.** And you have had a lot of rebuffs. They are not forthcoming. Is that because of the social stigma attaching to the industry or because the salary is not enough?

**A.** It is the force of custom. Indian ladies are conservative and that is why they don't come forward in this line.

**Mr. Bhavnani :** I personally think that in a very short time there will be a better class coming in. We have already got about 30 per cent. of educated people. If we have a slightly higher percentage of educated persons, I think more educated girls will come forward. In fact, they have approached us already but we have not found it possible to take them in at present. We were afraid they might be disappointed with the present state of affairs and go out of it altogether.

**Q.** I see nothing in the nature of an organised effort to find film actresses as we see at home, where you see the press utilised in the attempt to find a suitable film star.

**Mr. Bhavnani :** We are always on the look-out to find pretty girls. Mostly Anglo-Indians and Europeans, they come down to see us but they are not fit for our job. They have not the Indian style and Indian custom among them.

**Mr. Neogy :** Are you aware that a particular Anglo-Indian girl has proved a great success?

**A.** Well, we have to train them.

**Colonel Crawford :** I am a little bit under the impression that you have not tried hard enough. Would you be in favour of a school of acting being started at all?

**A.** Yes. With our own Indian professors, under private auspices. Or under the university, or the Government also, we don't mind.

*Q.* Not under official auspices?

*A.* Well, Oxford has got one under official management.

*Mr. Green :* No, it is not helped in any way by the University. It is simply an unofficial dramatic society.

*Colonel Crawford :* Has the trade itself tried to encourage any universities starting an amateur dramatic society with a view to supplying your requirements—financing dramatic clubs, etc.

*A.* Well, so far we have not.

*Q.* You mentioned the question of the cost of foreign pictures. These western films that come in, come into India at what cost?

*A.* At the raw material's cost—4 annas a foot.

*Q.* That is the only the duty on it. I mean the distributor buys from America. What is the amount he pays for a film?—about Rs. 2,000 or Rs. 3,000? Could you get us figures? It seems to me that these films must have cost much more than that to be produced. Are you suggesting that western countries are dumping films in India?

*A.* Of course they must be losing on the Indian market, but they have got the world market. For the Indian market they can give it cheap—they give the rights for India, Burma and Ceylon. They think it is a small island and they give it very cheap. I remember because I was once an importer. We imported very good American pictures for Rs. 3,000, 8 reels, 9 reels.

*Q.* That is very much below the cost of the actual print.

*A.* The actual copy costs them one anna per foot.

*Q.* What does a print cost you?

*A.* It costs us here one anna six pies to buy a print.

*Q.* We had evidence the other day that it was up to six annas—from the railways.

*Chairman :* That included a number of items like editing, etc.

*Colonel Crawford :* That is a very severe handicap from your point of view. Do you think that producers should be licensed?

*A.* No, Sir, we do not want any control. Leave us alone.

*Q.* Would it handicap you?

*A.* Certainly.

*Q.* In what way?

*A.* It is no use saying all these things. You know Government offices, what they are doing?

*Q.* But supposing the public were to suggest it?

*A.* No, no. It won't be desirable on the public side as well as on our side. We do not want any sort of license. We have got that much license on storing films. That has often been troublesome to us. So if you are going to have licensing of studios, it will make matters worse.

*Mr. Bhavnani :* But licensing with what purpose?

*Q.* Licensing with the object of preventing evil production.

*A.* Well, there is the censor for that.

*Q.* Well, if a producer has a license to produce and comes constantly before the censorship board with films that are really morally bad, he could be stopped.

*A.* They are not passed and he wastes his money.

*Chairman :* But how would you safeguard against the production of films not for public exhibition but for private use?

*A.* That is not done in India at all. And that is under the police and if it comes to the knowledge of the police the law against obscenity is quite sufficient to cope with it.

*Colonel Crawford* : Mr. Coatsman asked you several questions about travelling cinemas. You don't think there is any scope for the expansion of the industry by means of travelling cinemas?

*Mr. Irani* : No. Because wherever they go they find one or two cinemas permanent and established.

*Q.* I am talking of the field outside the sphere of the permanent cinemas—at big melas and so on.

*A.* Of course, melas generally have one or two travelling cinemas but they do not cover even their expenses.

*Q.* Have you made a personal examination of that question and its possibilities?

*A.* Yes, I have had personal experience of it.

*Q.* Because we have had evidence to show that when films are displayed, they have had as many as 4 or 5 thousand people going to watch them.

*A.* Not now.

*Q.* Yes, this was quite recently.

*A.* It must have been in small fairs or melas.

*Q.* I wanted to ask you if you had made a special examination.

*A.* We had many travelling cinemas and they had to close down.

*Q.* I was referring to the evidence we had from the railways.

*A.* They must be showing free of charge.

*Q.* Quite so. Free of charge. But I wanted to know if you had examined the position.

*A.* It is quite true they go and see such films, as a matter of fact they are forced in order to give them an idea of things.

*Q.* You are satisfied yourself that there is no room for expansion in that direction?

*A.* Yes. We have satisfied ourselves by examination of the position.

*Q.* Well, now, have you any difficulties as regards censorship? Has the producer any difficulty?

*A.* For the present we have not. It is quite satisfactory.

*Mr. Bhavnani* : But there is one thing I would like to say, that when a picture is banned or censored by an Inspector, and the picture is sent to the Board, I would very much like an Indian picture to be examined by purely an Indian Board. Because if there are Europeans on the Board, unless he is one who knows Indian life thoroughly well, he will misunderstand. I know of instances where certain scenes have been objected to by the inspector and by a couple of European members who saw it because they have not been able to understand our view point. Now, with regard to one picture which I produced two years back, it was a religious production in which Lord Krishna takes the guise of a leprous sadhu. The inspector did not like the scene and it was put before the Board and one member of the Board suggested that this scene with the leprous sadhu should be cut off because those who see such a picture might go and bow down before leprous sadhus in order to get a blessing from him. It was clearly mentioned that Lord Krishna had himself taken this form in order to justify himself. Now the board did not understand my view which was the Hindu point of view. Well, ultimately it was decided that the close shots of the scene, in which the leprous sadhu was seen very clearly, should be cut out and the long shots, in which he was not seen so clearly, should be kept.

Various such instances have happened. I mean to say Indian pictures should be passed by a board of Indian censors or people who have a thorough knowledge of Indian pictures.

*Mr. Coatsman* : As a mere matter of curiosity, when you were taking Lord Krishna as a leprous sadhu did you get hold of a real leper?

*Mr. Bhavnani* : No—it was a make-up.



*Mr. Irani:* Secondly, when pictures are banned, no reasons are given for what reason they are banned. They don't give us a reason and that should be clearly provided for.

*Col. Crawford:* We had this question up the other day. I see from page 63 of statement of censorship of films that the sort of reason given is "Rough handling of white girl by Moors is undesirable in India." And so on. Isn't that sort of information enough?

*A.* Of course if they give this sort of reason we shall be quite satisfied. Lastly, the picture is banned and after two months they give us this. When it is published in the Government Gazette we know the reason.

*Q.* They don't give it in the original rejection?

*A.* No, they don't. The reason should be given on the very day of the rejection. The inspector finds the picture objectionable but won't tell us there and then—so and so is objectionable. We might remove it there and then and give it to him.

*Mr. Green:* I would like to ask you one or two questions about the subject of censorship. Your last remark was, I gather, that you would like the inspector to say straight away: "I don't think that piece will pass the censors—will you cut it out?"

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* That is to say, you would like co-operation at the very start.

*A.* After seeing it he should say "This is what we don't like. Are you going to cut it out?"

*Q.* Does he do that sometimes now?

*A.* Yes, he does.

*Q.* And you welcome it? I ask you that, because we were rather puzzled a day or two ago at some of the excisions in that list of films. We thought some of the excisions were rather unnecessary. But I take it from you now that if you and the inspector are both agreed you are only too willing to cut out that rather than be delayed for anything up to a week while sanction is being obtained.

*A.* Quite.

*Q.* Then so far from regarding that as a grievance, you welcome it. Is that the director's view also?

*Mr. Bhavnani:* Oh yes, I agree.

*Q.* I will take you one step further. Would you like the co-operation of the inspector while you are producing?

*Mr. Irani:* No, that can't be done. It is not possible.

*Q.* You could say: Look here, this is my idea about the scenario, do you think the board of censors would object to that?

*A.* No, that won't do. We might change the details at the very last moment.

*Mr. Bhavnani:* In some cases it might be very important. A scene which we thought might be omitted might later on come into the picture.

*Q.* Assuming that the board of censors were prepared to advise on the scenarios, that would meet both your points. Those producers who wished to consult the censors could do so. You personally, Mr. Bhavnani, would welcome it?

*Mr. Bhavnani:* Well, I personally would welcome it.

*Mr. Irani:* But it will never work. Suppose in the scenario there is a bedroom. How are you going to depict the bedroom scene on the screen? We might do it in a very objectionable way.

*Q.* I quite agree. They can only advise you generally. You have some complaint which you have already made that the Board is not very communicative. Now, in the case of films which have parts cut out only, am I right in saying that the excisions are actually endorsed on the back of the certi-

feates which you obtain? Well there, you have reasons given for the excisions.

Mr. Irani: After the picture is cut and the certificate is given, then only is the endorsement made over it.

Q. You are aware that by the statutory rules under which the board works, it is the duty of the board at each meeting to hear any representation from you gentlemen that you wish to make on any of their decisions?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you ever approached the board for a hearing or have you not had a grievance to offer?

A. We have approached them and been satisfied.

Q. I think that you are satisfied with the working of the board?

A. Oh yes, we are quite satisfied.

Q. You have no doubt heard a suggestion that the board should be re-constituted in such a way that every film could be seen by at least two—some gentlemen say 4—members of the board themselves, not by the inspector or the secretary.

A. No, I am not in favour of that.

Q. Well, this is being pressed on us with some persistence. So as you are producers—I think you are the first gentlemen I have had the opportunity of putting this to as producers—do you think that there will be no difficulty in getting a number of men who would work full time for quite nominal fees?—experienced gentlemen of all castes and creeds who will work in Bombay year in and year out. I put it to you, would it not mean delay in censorship?

A. It will mean a great delay. If there are three members—you might find 2 but you might not find the third. If the inspector finds anything objectionable let him put it to the board.

Q. How long do you find it takes to get a film examined at present?

A. Within ten days. But they get it done earlier sometimes.

Q. Supposing instead of having a voluntary board or an unofficial board, you had a stipendiary board, that is to say, the board increased its paid staff so that two inspectors or two paid members of the board could always see a film—would that be better?

A. Two inspectors are good. It won't delay our work.

Q. I mean two inspectors to see every film.

A. There is no necessity for that.

Q. I put that question because that is the English system. Every film is seen by two supervising censors at the same time on the principle that two heads are better than one.

A. It will cost the board much more money and they will put that cost on us and we don't want to be burdened with the cost and we are quite satisfied with one inspector.

Q. Supposing it was arranged without any extra cost to you with the present examination fee?

A. Well, in that case if the board think it necessary they can make the arrangement. So long as it does not cost us any more money.

Q. You have also heard the proposal that there should be a central board for the whole of India. Does that meet with your approval?

A. Yes. Over and above the provincial boards. As a sort of appeal board?

Q. No, one suggestion was that there should be one board for the whole of India.

A. No, no. We want our provincial board and besides that there should be a central board,—what we call an appeal board for the whole of India.

*Q.* At present you have an appeal but it is only to the local Government. They can pass orders for the Bombay Presidency but they could not pass orders for the Punjab.

*A.* And another thing. A picture passed by one provincial board should be shown all over India and should not be banned by another provincial board.

*Q.* At present as the law stands once a certificate is obtained from any board, it is valid throughout India unless and until it is banned by another local Government. The local administration can suspend it and take the orders of their local Government and they can ban it. Don't you think some such proviso as that is necessary.

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Supposing you produce a film that can be shown in Bombay without any objection. Has it not happened that some such film—even when taken to places like Sind which is part of the Bombay Presidency—has given such offence to certain communities as almost to cause civil disturbances?

*A.* In that case, there should be temporary suspension of the film—you don't need to ban it absolutely. Because in that case we will be absolutely losers in the case.

*Q.* You mean to say if it goes to any other area, where the same objection does not exist, the ban should be lifted.

*A.* Yes.

*Mr. Irani:* It all depends upon the circumstances and time.

*Mr. Dave:* Supposing there is some movement going on, such as Mr. Gandhi's movement, then it can be done, but it should not be banned permanently.

*Mr. Bhavnani:* Why should it be banned even in that case?

*Mr. Green:* At present, there is no mechanism by which it can be done. You have either to pass it or to ban it.

*Mr. Irani:* Yes. We may have a temporary suspension of the picture.

*Mr. Green:* On the whole, am I correct in saying that as producers you are all satisfied with the present method of censorship?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Let me come to the actual production side. This is a young industry, and it appears to me from what we have heard that there is a very distinct future for it. I am rather puzzled why you are so insistent on Government aid in the financial line. Would not such aid involve a certain amount of Government control?

*A.* We do not want any control.

*Q.* I quite agree with you. I should not like to see Government trying to control production. I should be very sorry to have to administer any such Act myself. But if you ask for financial help you will not get something for nothing. Would you not be incurring the risk of Government butting in and interfering with you if you sought its aid?

*A.* We shall give security for the money and on that security Government can realise its money back immediately.

*Q.* I am not talking about Government acting as a banker. Government, like any other body, would not give money for nothing. If you ask Government to lend you money at market rates, then you can as well get it from the market. If you want money from Government at something less than the market rate, then they will expect something in return. I am only putting before you the risk.

*A.* In that case we won't get the money from the Government. We will go and get it from outside.

*Q.* That is what I am suggesting to you, that you should get it from outside. Is there any way of reducing the cost of production other than

that of Government assistance? Perhaps, I ought to take up the question of duty first. You want the duty to be reduced on raw materials?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you up till now approached the Tariff Board to enquire into that matter?

A. No.

Q. If you feel handicapped owing to the duty, that is the proper body to deal with a request of this kind.

A. Cannot this Committee do it on our behalf?

Q. The Tariff Board is very experienced in going into financial details and I should be inclined to think that that is a better way. There are other ways of reducing the cost of films. If you take and make only one copy of a particular picture the whole of your overhead costs of production goes into that one picture?

A. Yes.

Q. How many copies do you usually make at present? 3 or 5?

A. 5 or 6 copies we make.

Q. If you are going to take an additional copy what will it cost you?

A. It will cost Rs. 1,000.

Q. For what length of film?

A. 10,000 feet of film.

Q. Say, you spend Rs. 50,000 on producing a film of 10,000 feet, does that include the 5 copies which you make in the ordinary way?

A. Yes.

Q. Everything? Say you could make five more copies for another Rs. 5,000 and if you had a sufficient market to absorb those copies, your overhead charges would be spread over all those 10 copies instead of the 5 copies, and would be very much reduced?

A. We generally do the same thing.

Q. And if you were able to produce and dispose of either by hire or by sale 100 copies, your overhead charges would be tremendously reduced?

A. Who would buy 100 copies?

Q. I will come to that a little later. I want to clear my own mind on the subject. Is it not a fact that it is possible to sell American films so cheaply because they have a very big market in America itself?

A. Yes.

Q. Could any of you, gentlemen, tell me how many copies are made of an American film?

Mr. Bhavnani: Up to 200.

Q. I have been informed that in a case like that the American production has paid its way before a single copy of the film has left America for export.

Mr. Bhavnani: I do not know for certain, but I hear that America itself pays back the cost of production.

Q. I take it because it has a very great domestic market.

Mr. Bhavnani: Yes. There are 20,000 theatres there.

Mr. Irani: 2,000 or 3,000 copies they make in America. A copy would not run more than ten stations. If one copy would run only for ten stations, they have got so many theatres and the whole world market.

Q. I take it that is the reason why really good films of American origin can be landed at Bombay at a c.i.f. cost under that of your own films?

A. Ten times under.

Q. The obvious remedy, if possible, is to increase your production, that is to say, to increase your market?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think it is impossible that you should be able to increase your market?

A. For the present it is impossible.

Q. You are at present satisfied or you have not tried to go beyond the Indian market with one or two exceptions?

Mr. Bhavnani: We have gone to America.

Mr. Irani: We are trying Straits Settlements also.

Q. And you hope to get "Sacrifice"—is that your film?

Mr. Dave: That is not our film.

Q. I am very chary of broaching this subject because I have been misunderstood. I am reported in the press to have asked a witness why he did not want British films in India. I was trying to ask whether he would not like Indian made films exhibited in England. If I broach that subject to you I hope I won't be misunderstood. I want Indian films exhibited in England. Would you welcome that?

Mr. Bhavnani: I would. Every producer would.

Q. In that case, the provisions of the Bill now before the Imperial Parliament must be of interest to you?

A. Yes.

Q. As the President has told you, it aims at forcing renters and exhibitors to run and exhibit in a given period a certain proportion of what the Bill calls British films. A British film is defined in the Act as a film produced anywhere in the British Empire and it would therefore cover India. There was opposition to the Bill because the exhibitors were frightened that they would not be able to get a sufficient number of such films. Will not that help the Indian producers to send films to England with a better chance of getting those films accepted for exhibition?

A. If they accept we will send them.

Q. You have been in England, Mr. Bhavnani?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you know if a film made in India, with interesting Indian scenery, Indian characters and Indian history, would have any appeal in England?

A. It will, if it is nicely produced.

Q. If it is well done?

A. Yes.

Q. If you represent that to any of your financial friends who has so far been so shy, could not that help to persuade him to put money into the industry?

A. I think Indian financiers would come forward if a couple of productions had been successfully exhibited.

Colonel Crawford: What about "The Light of Asia"?

A. That was not an Indian production. That was a combination of German and Indian.

Q. It was produced in India?

A. Yes, but partly foreign capital and partly Indian capital, directed and photographed by foreigners.

Mr. Irani: It was printed in Germany, developed in Germany and exposed in India.

Mr. Green: Would you welcome any provision, if it is possible to arrange it, for reciprocity, that is to say, that English exhibitors should undertake and exhibit one per cent. of Indian films on condition that Indian exhibitors should undertake to exhibit one per cent.

Mr. Bhavnani: If they give us a guarantee.

Q. It will have to be hard and fast agreement.

*Mr. Bharnani:* Yes, I think it will be very good for us as well as the Britishers.

*Mr. Irani:* Yes.

*Chairman:* I want to be clear about one point from the directors' point of view. For instance, in some of the Indian reels you are asked to omit the title, for instance, "We are not ashamed to conduct woman suffrage. They do that more vigorously in England."

*Mr. Bharnani:* I do not personally think it is going to completely mar my subject, but I do not know whether the censor has objection to the actual wording of the title. In that case, the best thing would be to change the wording and express it by other words.

*Q.* You are asked to omit, "Oh, God, I have always been a man of peace. But the ways of peace seem to have gone wrong. Please guide me." Do you think it is intended to develop directing capacity in the country? Do you think it will encourage the director of a film like that to develop freedom in his own line if he is asked to do that? I want to know from the directors' point of view. Do you think an English director or an American director would stand any such treatment?

*A.* Well, I think he will resent it.

*Q.* Will it conduce to freedom of development?

*A.* It might be the director's fault or the scenario writer's fault.

*Q.* Do you think that a scenario writer who is asked to omit the words I have quoted—do you think that it will encourage him?

*A.* I cannot exactly say why the censors object to it.

*Q.* I want your view as a director.

*A.* I think it does to a certain extent.

*Q.* Interfere with the freedom?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Take again another case. "Ah, me. She is smoking a cigarette. Female education has to be thanked for this." He is asked to omit it. Do you think that it encourages development of the art in this country?

*A.* You cannot at once generalise that certain directors have certain views.

*Q.* The censor asks you to omit such titles. Do you think it is conducive to good direction, to the development of good direction in this country?

*A.* Well, it does to a certain extent.

*Q.* Take again another. You are asked to omit the words 'in freedom' in "My sons; die in freedom rather than living in Shivaji's service".

*A.* I think that is very wrong of the censor. I do not know why the words 'in freedom' should be omitted.

*Q.* Do you consider that such interference by the censor is conducive to the development of the art?

*A.* It is not conducive to the art of the cinemas.

*Q.* Do you want to say anything else as a director separately?

*A.* I have nothing to add. If you ask me questions I am prepared to answer them, but I have nothing further to say now.

**Oral Evidence of Messrs. B. P. MISRA and CHIMANLAL M. LOHAR, Representatives of the Workers' Association, on Friday, the 11th November 1927.**

*Chairman:* What are you?

*Mr. Misra:* I am the General Secretary of the Workers' Association. The Workers' Association consists of the camera men, the scenario writers, actors, actresses, studio hands, artists, etc.

**Q.** When was your Association formed?

**A.** About 15 days back. We were just trying to form such an association, but we had been receiving opposition from the producers and the proprietors of the particular studios. Now they are co-operating with us and giving us encouragement.

**Q.** I dare say you have been present during the examination of witnesses both yesterday and to-day. What is it you want particularly to say?

**A.** I think all the facts in connection with the industry have not been fully placed by the people who are not actually directly connected with the producing line. Never mind, they may be producers and proprietors of particular cinema studios; but it is not expected that they should know the business thoroughly well as the workers do. So it is we have come here and we have been sent by our association to explain the particular things that concern the producing as well as to a certain extent the distributing side.

**Q.** What is it you want to say which has not been so far elucidated?

**A.** We were not present here yesterday. We came here only to-day, this morning at 11 o'clock.

**Q.** You are interested in the producing side? What are the difficulties in your way which you want to place before us?

**A.** Should we place them in a constructive way?

**Q.** If you do not know your mind we cannot help you. What are the difficulties in your line?

**A.** Yes, the difficulty at the present moment is that the market for the Indian films is very limited. We cannot expect to produce a better type of films for the existing market. As our producers have said, Rs. 50,000 is spent on a particular film. I do not think Rs. 50,000 will have a return of Rs. 50,000 from the Indian theatres. There are hardly 40 theatres in India that are running Indian pictures.

**Q.** What about the others?

**A.** The others are in the Madans' circuit. They have got about 100 theatres in their circuit. Then there are other military centres and there are certain theatres where Indian pictures are never run.

**Q.** You say there is difficulty in exhibiting Indian produced films. That is one thing. Is there any other thing which you want to say?

**A.** Yes. Then we must have an expansion of the market. We must have the same quota of our films running in the Empire as the other Imperial countries have for their films in India. If at all the colonial films and films produced in the British Empire—if they are to be put on the Indian market, if a particular quota, a particular percentage is fixed for running in our theatres.

**Q.** There is no such proposal. The proposal is in order to encourage Indian films to have quota for Indian pictures.

**A.** I would say that India could never offer a good market for the development of first rate films. Even in America before they started producing the million dollar pictures that are now being produced, their productions were in no way better than what we are producing just now, because they had a limited market.

**Q.** You want to encourage the growth of a foreign market?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And for that purpose you suggest that there should be a mutual agreement between the various parts of the Empire that they should take in Indian goods and you should take in their goods?

**A.** That would be something like a barter.

**Q.** An agreement to help each other?

**A.** Yes. If I am not mistaken some such declaration was made by the Empire Film Board when its meetings were taking place in London.

Q. Do you think it would be advantageous from the point of view of the Indian film industry to enter into such arrangement?

A. That is the best help that the Government could ever give. We would be able to interchange our ideas a lot, good understanding in the social, political and other atmosphere will be created and the countries will come to know each other better.

Q. You recognise that at present your Indian industry is in such an infantile condition, both in regard to finance and capacity to produce, that you think you can really compete with the other parts of the Empire?

A. We deny that the industry is in any infantile condition. We admit that the producers are in an infantile condition, but not the industry. (Laughter). Can any instance be shown of a picture produced for a foreign country having not been successful there? Any picture produced for an international market had an international run. "The Light of Asia".

Q. Can you tell us what run "The Light of Asia" had in England?

A. As far as I know, they got about Rs. 1½ lakhs from the continental market as the return on that picture.

Q. I am asking you about England.

A. I am not connected with the studio, but the capital that was invested in it has practically been given back to the shareholders.

Q. I am asking whether it had a good run in England?

A. That is what we have read in the papers.

Q. Is that the only instance you can mention?

A. That is the only film that has had an international market, and the only film produced for an international market.

Q. And that by foreign agency mostly.

A. I do not believe.

Q. Was it not so in the case of "The Light of Asia"?

A. I was myself indirectly, if not directly, connected with some of the people who were producing that picture. There was only one German camera man. As far as direction and scenario were concerned, they were purely done by Indians. The technical direction was controlled by Indians themselves.

Q. You were connected with the production of "The Light of Asia"?

A. Not with the production, but with people who were actually producing it. Mr. Himansu Rai who was the organiser and who acted as Lord Buddha was a great friend of mine. Mr. Sarma of Delhi was the managing director. He denied the fact that the picture was produced by German experts.

Q. You think, then, that in order to produce films of international value it will be better to have some agreement of that sort with the various parts of the Empire, if not the rest of the world?

A. Yes.

Q. But how would that help the Indian industry now?

A. Now I think if we produce a picture with the sole intention of running it in foreign markets it will have a run in the foreign markets.

Q. You attach greater importance to the foreign market.

A. We do attach importance to foreign markets.

Q. Supposing you concentrate your energy on that, how do you think it will affect your industry so far as the supply of the demand in the country is concerned?

A. The demand in the country is very scanty.

Q. The Indian industry now supplies only that demand?

A. Can hardly supply the demand.

Q. Its only market is India?

A. Yes.



*Q.* You want to develop an international market. What effect would it have on the industry as it is at present run?

*A.* The industry will expand. More industrial capital will be forthcoming into the industry, more people with better ambitions and better knowledge will join the industry.

*Q.* You do not think it would have any injurious effect on the industry already running?

*A.* Absolutely not.

*Q.* If we can get the other parts of the Empire to agree to such a course, you think it would be advantageous?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* What else do you want to say?

*Mr. Lohar:* I want to say something about the camera men in the industry. I think they are sufficiently experienced.

*Q.* You mean, men already working in that direction?

*A.* Yes. They are sufficiently well experienced. The only thing America beats us in photography is the arc light and the differentiation in the value of the various lights. If the Government are going to help us sincerely and if some such academic movement is set afoot whereby scholarships are given to deserving men already in the industry and the camera men are sent out to some such institution where a course of a year would be sufficient for them, because they have already got experience in the handling of the camera and also possess theoretical knowledge, but they do not put all that theoretical knowledge into practice...

*Q.* You want an institution to be started here?

*A.* Yes. It may teach us photography on an electrical basis.

*Q.* You want educational facilities in the country?

*A.* If the Government are not prepared to send out people every year.

*Q.* If educational facilities are created in the country you think it would be an advantage to the country?

*A.* At least to the Indian camera men.

*Q.* The existing educational facilities are not sufficient?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* You mean in the other technical subjects this subject also may be included as a part of the training of the youth of the country?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Is there any institution where training is given for camera men?

*A.* The work teaches that.

*Colonel Crawford:* Have you got an institution in America for training?

*A.* There are a few institutions which have a course of 6 months, or 8 months or one year, and they issue a diploma.

*Chairman:* You want a vocational course in this line added to the educational institutions. Is that your idea?

*A.* Yes.

*Mr. Misra:* We have to touch on another question which is very vital to the existence of the workers and that is about foreign experts. We know our capacities and have been seeing the capacities of other workers also, and we are convinced that the so-called foreign experts would be absolutely of no use to the Indian film studios for the production of Indian pictures purely on the Indian basis. As we have experienced, about half a dozen foreign experts came to India. They were always failures and very great failures too.

*Q.* When was that?

*A.* It was the very first company, the Oriental Films Limited. One Mr. Singh was the organiser of that particular company.

*Q.* He brought out with him one Mr. Vonraven (?). His wife came as the Star while he was the Camera Man. Mr. Vonraven proposed to put the first picture—Shakuntala—on the international market, but when it was produced it turned out to be a complete failure. Better pictures were being produced by the Hindustan Cinema by Mr. Phabke who was not a foreign expert. Foreign experts have been brought in and they could not produce any picture which has had a run in foreign countries. Side by side with pictures produced by our own studios in Bombay, they were failures. Why then should so much credit be given to foreign experts. They are not suited to the industry here. Foreign experts who are real experts won't come out here except on exorbitant salaries. A Director, for instance, won't come for less than Rs. 30,000.

*Q.* That has already been said. You need not dilate upon the point. The other point is that foreign experts have turned out to be useless for doing work here?

*A.* We can give you facts and figures for that.

*Q.* But what do you suggest should be done in order to train Indians. Do you think they require no training?

*A.* They do require certain general information. For that, as Mr. Lohar has stated, the Government should give State Scholarships and the workers should be sent on a flying visit to Germany or America.

*Q.* Will a flying visit do for that?

*A.* Yes, I think so, because if they stay there their ideas may be converted into foreign ideas and so when they return to India they will be no use to us.

*Q.* What do you mean by a flying visit?

*A.* A six months stay in America will be quite sufficient for a really expert man from India who goes for general information.

*Q.* Would he enter into any contract that he will serve the industry when he returns, if such a man were sent abroad?

*Mr. Lohar:* He must be sent under a contract.

*Mr. Mista:* Or if he retires from the industry he should pay back the money.

*Q.* We have experimented on these lines in other directions and we have found it very difficult to get back the money. Any way you think it will be an advantage to give some sort of Government aid. Do you want complete aid or partial aid in that direction.

*A.* Well, there may be alternatives given; it will be a lesser burden on the man who goes if it is partial.

*Q.* Would you advocate a loan system or a grant?

*A.* Personally I should prefer the loan system, because then the man would be free the moment he paid back the loan with the interest. I think that would be more acceptable to the workers and more volunteers would come in.

*Q.* What do you think of the suggestion made by your friends there about opening vocational classes in this country?

*A.* That would be another good thing, but it might involve the Government in unnecessary expenditure because opening an institution means a lot of money.

*Q.* In the line he mentioned, for instance, Camera people—you do not want to send them abroad to learn their work?

*A.* If we have to get people from abroad that will be more costly than if the students are sent from here to foreign countries to learn.

*Q.* Have you got anything else to say?

*A.* Then we had some other things to say about American pictures and their censorship. We produce pictures, we know exactly their value while

they are being criticised publicly outside. To-day the first witness who gave evidence made some remarks about American pictures being objected to because children are going to see those pictures. We are of opinion that there should not be anything on the certificate indicating that the picture should be shown only to adults or only to children. That would be another hindrance in the way of the industry. I think the parents and guardians of the children themselves are better censors for their children than the Censorship Board can be.

*Q.* I may tell you that we shall be very glad to have your views on those matters but unfortunately our time is limited. Now we want to get at your difficulties as workers.

*A.* Well, we have explained our difficulties.

*Mr. Green:* You are speaking as a practical man with practical experience of the production of films?

*A.* Yes, I have produced 27 films, both writing and directing them.

*Q.* Have you had any experience of exhibiting?

*A.* Yes, I had my own company out in which I produced 10 pictures and I exhibited these throughout India.

*Q.* And if I understand you correctly you want reciprocity with other parts of the British Empire purely for business reasons, and you think it will be a paying business?

*A.* Yes.

*Colonel Crawford:* If all the theatres in India were thrown open to Indian produced pictures would that give you a good enough market? I rather gathered that there was not a sufficient market to justify you in producing first-class films.

*A.* Supposing all theatres were thrown open, even then the number of theatres is not sufficiently large to induce us to produce pictures on which we have to spend as much as we spend for an international picture.

*Q.* The market in India to-day is only sufficient for cheap films to make a profit on, that is your opinion?

*A.* That is what is being done by producers.

*Q.* That is as far as the industry has gone to-day? Well, what prevents the production of international films?

*A.* Want of capital. Our producers engaged in the industry are getting back the money which they invest with a very good margin of profit on the cheap films, so why should they bother about international pictures and run any big risks.

*Q.* There is no incentive at present?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Now you said that one of the drawbacks was that you have nobody in India with a knowledge of the technique of lighting. Would you approve of the idea of an expert on lighting being placed at your disposal in India to help you?

*Mr. Lohar:* Yes. I mean, in my experience at present, I am trying to get a contrivance by which I can secure an arc effect over my characters. Of course there is some substantial difference in the photography but an American close-up and a close-up taken by me with this lighting are not very different on the screen. So if an arc light were at my disposal, with very little experiment I think I could manage that.

*Q.* You think it would be of assistance to you if you had an expert electrician whom you could call in and say "Look here, I want to get this lighting effect." That would be an advantage to you pending the time when you can get your own men trained abroad. That is where you feel you are short in the industry. Well now what has prevented your getting arc lights on your own?

*A.* It is a question of capital.

**Q.** It is too expensive to be profitable?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Too expensive to be profitable in your present market, is that the position?

**A.** I think myself that as far as photography in a picture goes, Indian producers do not lay enough emphasis on better photography. Good photography makes a picture go more successfully than otherwise.

**Q.** But it is a question of what pays best.

**A.** Good photography registers finer emotions.

**Q.** But does it bring you any bigger profit?

**Mr. Mitra:** In India it won't.

**Q.** That I imagine is the point, and therefore they are not doing it.

**A.** All depends on the market. When the demand increases the supply will increase and become more efficient.

**Q.** Is there any literature existing from which you can learn the cinema industry?

**A.** Plenty. We have got literature of our own.

**Q.** In any case you can get it from America in this country and learn most of the technique by studying those books?

**A.** And studying their pictures.

**Q.** One of you said there were schools in America for training in Cinematography. Do they have correspondence courses?

**A.** Yes, they have, but the real thing we want to learn is the management of the arc light.

**Mr. Neogy:** I take it that you consider the foreign market to be very attractive and you have further stated that whenever pictures were made expressly for the international market they have proved successful. What prevents you then from producing more of this class of pictures?

**A.** There are two things behind it. One is that talent has to be organised properly and up till now no attempt has been made to organise talented people for an international picture. The producers who are already in the line fear to take such big risks when they are already making money. Those not in the line are very scarce; they do not wish to come forward. And the workers are too busy with their own work for time to think of international pictures. So the incentive must come from outside the existing cinema world in India. Any attempt that has been made has been made by outside people and not by the people actually in the line.

**Q.** So you put it down to lack of enterprise on the part of capitalists more or less who finance these concerns. Is it so?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** I think you said that the existing market in India has not got much possibility of expansion. I find that your ambition is to secure a foothold in the foreign markets. I do not understand why you don't look forward to supplanting the foreign importer so far as India is concerned. Supposing you were in a position to drive out foreign pictures gradually, would you not consider the Indian market itself to be an attractive market?

**A.** When we produce better pictures those pictures will be taking the place of Western films and we shall get a better chance.

**Q.** Unless you produce better pictures you would have no chance in the foreign market, and you could have as good a market in India for some time to come. If you succeed in producing good pictures then you would be in a position to supplant foreign films in India.

**A.** I am not convinced. I do not think there are more than 300 or 350 cinema theatres in India. If you calculate the amount they are paying for their weekly programmes, I do not think the whole will amount to more than Rs. 46,000.

**Q.** So you think that if you could succeed in driving out a good proportion of the foreign films from the Indian theatres, even that won't be sufficient?

**A.** Unless we produce pictures of international value.

**Q.** You hope to get more from the foreign market by producing pictures of international value. You are in favour of a barter system between India and other countries. Is there any reason why you should exclude those parts of the world which do not belong to the British Empire from this system of barter? You have no particular reason to confine your scheme of barter to the British Empire?

**A.** No.

**Q.** For instance, if Turkey, were in a position to produce very good Oriental pictures, would there be any reason to shut out Turkey from any scheme of barter?

**A.** No, why should there be.

**Q.** So I take it you are interested in getting a market overseas and you are not interested in the propaganda aspect of the question which might seek to confine this reciprocity scheme to the British Empire.

**A.** Just at the present moment that may give us a lift to come before the international market; and then afterwards we shall have our hold on the market.

*Mr. Coatsman:* In fact you can use Imperial reciprocity as a springboard.

**A.** Yes.

*Mr. Neogy:* Supposing other countries not belonging to the British Empire come forward to join such a scheme, you would welcome that? Supposing a particular country wants to take particular pictures of yours and offers in exchange other good acceptable films, you will have no reason to refuse that offer?

**A.** No, we won't refuse such an offer.

**Q.** Do you consider that the present atmosphere of the studios in Bombay is good enough to attract the better class of people as actors and actresses.

**A.** There is nothing bad in the atmosphere. We are in the studios, we are concerned with the life prevailing in the studios during working hours and as far as our experience is concerned there is nothing bad that can keep a man from entering.

**Q.** Do you think that strict discipline is enforced in the studios during working hours?

**A.** Yes, I think so. They don't even give scope to the workers to have their own freedom, so strict are the studios here.

**Q.** Who is the authority that imposes this discipline?

**A.** It is the financier.

**Q.** Are you satisfied with the remuneration that you are getting?

**A.** Do you mean myself particularly or the workers generally.

**Q.** I mean those on whose behalf you are speaking.

**A.** I think Indians are not getting their dues as much as they ought to do. Whatever the work they may be doing on the screen, in any department—it may be photography or acting—they are not getting their dues. While those people who have gone out to foreign countries and have returned here, although they may not have learnt anything further, when they return they impose upon the producers and extort a lot of money.

**Q.** You are an indigenous body, that is to say, your membership is strictly confined to those who have not gone abroad?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** So your grievance is that the financier is preferring.

**A.** The so-called foreign-returned men.

Q. Who are being treated on more generous terms. Is that your case?

A. Yes.

Q. For no sufficient reason?

A. Yes.

Q. You do not seem to attach any great importance to training abroad.

A. In what particular department?

Q. Different technical departments.

A. There is only one technical department, photography, and as our photographic expert has said, he only wants a little information as to lighting effects.

Q. So that if the Committee were to recommend any technical scholarships to be given for the purpose of encouraging this industry, you would confine that training only to training of camera men.

A. That is the greatest need.

Q. You do not think, for instance, that we need send a man like you to America to see how they manage things there?

A. They are managing their things in their own way and we are managing in our own way.

Q. You think you won't gain knowledge by going abroad at Government expense to learn the art?

A. I think I may get a little general information and a little knowledge of organisation: nothing more.

Q. So you do not attach importance to it.

A. Absolutely none.

Mr. Coatsman: I think you said that the direction of "The Light of Asia" film was practically entirely Indian?

A. That is what I was given to understand. I believe it to be true.

Q. Do you know if the Indian industry at present moment could produce other films of equal workmanship?

A. Yes, we are decided on the point.

**Written Statement of Mr. S. G. WARTY, M.A., Editor, "Postman,"  
Bombay, and Honorary Secretary, Bombay Presidency Postmen's  
Union.**

I am Editor of the "Postman," Bombay, and Honorary Secretary of the Bombay Presidency Postmen's Union. I also contribute largely to well-known journals in India on matters political, economic and social. I am also the Indian Correspondent of certain British Journals.

I do not claim to possess any special knowledge of the Cinematograph industry in India. But I am a frequent visitor of cinemas and often inquire regarding the tastes of the public in general. I do not propose to give replies to each consecutive question, but shall state my views in a running, connected manner, observing as far as it is possible to do so, the order in the questionnaire.

There is no doubt of the fact that cinemas are getting rapidly popular in India and there is almost unlimited scope for their development in this country. Up till now, only the principal cities have been reached by the Cinema but the district towns and villages yet remain untouched. So far as Bombay City is concerned, the Cinema has become popular both among the educated and illiterate classes, the former, as a rule, frequenting the better class of films. It may roughly be said that two-thirds of the audience consists of the illiterate or, more properly, less educated classes, while children of impressionable age comprise about one-fifth of the audience.

It goes without saying that films which depict historical incidents, mythological stories, etc., are more popular with the generality of the people than scenes in every day life. That is the reason why the majority of the successful Indian films are of the former class. As a rule, the illiterate classes visit the cinema merely as a pastime and the question whether a film is good or bad does not seem to concern them much. The educated classes on the other hand are attracted to the Cinema only by the reputation of the film. Some recent films depicting incidents from Maratha History such as "Netaji Palkar" now being displayed in Bombay, or films like Tagore's "Sacrifice" with the reputation of the poet to back it up, have attracted large educated audiences.

It is very unfortunate that the get up of the Indian films is poor. I cannot say where exactly the fault lies. It may be defective photography, insufficient and ill-distributed colour, unskilled acting or anything of the sort. But on the whole, the exhibition of the film undoubtedly suffers when compared with a British or other foreign film. I remember some time ago, an Italian film known as "Savitri" was exhibited in some Bombay cinemas, and though it was an Indian mythological plot, the acting and the scenes displayed in the film were undoubtedly superior to anything that has been shown in any Indian-produced mythological film. Similarly, even though Tagore's "Sacrifice" is undoubtedly a famous and deservedly famous play, yet the exhibition of it in an Indian-produced film has not certainly been as skillful as it should have been or as it was even advertised to be. I do think therefore that there is vast scope for improvement in the Indian industry and efforts should be made and effective steps should be taken immediately in that direction.

When, however, it is asked as to what steps should be taken to improve and develop the industry it is difficult to give a ready answer. I do not believe that the amusement tax has proved a handicap to the industry; also if the present tariff on imported films affords some protection to the Indian-made films, it should be continued. It is customary in these days to claim tariff protection for every Indian industry. I am of opinion that so far as the Indian film industry is concerned, improvement can be brought about only by specially directed action and not by any artificial raising of the tariff.

The steps which, in my opinion, Government should take in present circumstances, are as follows:—

1. Special scholarships should be instituted for competent science students to study cinema production on its technical side in England, America and the Continent. At least three scholars every year should be sent from each province.
2. Where suitable educational, agricultural and public health films are undertaken by private enterprise, Government should give them subsidies, and in some cases even provide some amount of capital. Government may even take the initiative in such cases and induce private enterprise instead of waiting till private enterprise of itself calls on them.
3. Government may also start in the beginning a class in each province for scenerio writing for a small number of approved candidates to be taught by well-qualified persons, if necessary imported from England to serve in India for a certain number of years.
4. Some arrangements may also be made for tuition in acting, etc.

I am totally opposed to making the industry a State monopoly. It should be allowed to be developed entirely by private enterprise, with the assistance and encouragement of Government on the lines stated above. There is no fear of the industry being stunted for want of capital if the production is profitable, which I learn in present circumstances it certainly is. Nor need it be apprehended that under private enterprise, the films would not conform to moral standards. There is a Board of Censors in every province

which I think do their work satisfactorily. If necessary, Government may issue stricter instructions to them.

I consider it necessary here to emphasize the need of extensive use of cinema films for educational purposes in schools and for mass education in Agriculture, Public health, etc. I have already recommended above that Government should promote the production and use of such films by special subsidies, etc., to private enterprise. These films should be educational only indirectly and should be primarily amusing. Considerable intelligence will be required on the part of the director of the film to combine these two aims but that should be done. In villages, the agricultural films would do more effective work than the leaflets issued by the Agricultural Departments which mostly remain unread owing to prevailing illiteracy. The new processes of improved cultivation can be very efficiently demonstrated and the results may be woven in a story plot of success as contrasted with failure. The same may be said in regard to public health. My children who attend a Municipal Vernacular school were once shown a film in their school explaining the genesis of cholera and its prevention and treatment when an epidemic was apprehended, and they were so impressed that when they returned home, they explained to me and my wife very clearly, things which we ourselves had partly forgotten. That is what the cinema does on its educational side when properly directed.

I should think that such educational films should be displayed only at some plots. Otherwise, because the amusement side will be lacking, there will be little attraction to them. They need not be shown free to people in the villages; for in that case they will be appreciated less. A small fee of from one anna for third class to four annas for first class should be charged in rural areas, and such should be the terms on which assistance to private enterprise may be given. Of course on festive occasions, or when there is a fair in a village, some such films may be exhibited free as an exception. In villages people can easily digest instruction along with some amusement, whereas in the more taxing atmosphere of the cities, something more sensational is desired.

I next proceed to discuss questions regarding British Empire films. I am one of those who think that the ties of friendship between India and the rest of the Empire should be strengthened in all possible ways. I should feel no objection to give some measure of encouragement to British Empire films in India. But I am not sure that it would assist the development of the Indian industry. If anything, it is likely to compete with the Indian industry and impede to some extent its growth. But this sacrifice India would make, provided the Indian Government take steps for the production of superior films in India depicting all the good qualities of Indian life and civilization and for their exhibition in the rest of the Empire. There exists at present considerable ignorance and, what is worse, wrong ideas regarding Indian life and conditions and of late the propaganda carried on by some unknown British agencies against India in England and outside has further aggravated the situation. Miss Katharine Mayo's notorious, scandalous book has done its work and the fact that the Government of India has not taken any steps to counteract the propaganda indicates that this Government is not so solicitous about interpreting India truly to the rest of the Empire as about interpreting the rest of the Empire to India. I should think that while the idea of encouraging the British Empire films should be accepted, the first practical step to be taken in that connection should be the production of films in India representing Indian life and civilization and their exhibition in England and her Dominions. Taking this first practical step, alone can convince the people of this country that it is not the mere encouragement of British films in India that Government truly desire but the development of Indian films as well for Empire use.

Coming next to the social aspects of the question and the policy to be adopted in regard to control, I am not aware in the first place of any injurious effects having been produced by the exhibition of films in this country on the morals of the people either in connection with sex or crime.



On the whole I think the Board of Censorship are exercising their control satisfactorily, and as I have suggested above, instructions may be issued to exercise stricter control if necessary. I do not think any film offending religious susceptibilities has up till now been exhibited anywhere in India and if the Board of Censorship continues to be as circumspect as it has been up till now, there need be no fear in this direction. Similarly, I am not aware of any film mis-representing Western civilization in India. There are, however, certain love aspects of Western life, such as kissing in public and free association between men and women, which without the background in the form of a knowledge of Western ideas and institutions as found in books at least, do create an impression among the public in India that the British are an intensely sensual people. Such exhibition of love in public is foreign to Indian sentiment. But beyond this there is not much harm done. The cinema in fact does not bring any new impression regarding Western life. Indians of all classes, and especially the masses even in rural areas, are of some vague opinion that constancy in love, chastity, and such other womanly virtues are very little prized in the West and that in fact considerable indulgence is allowed in these matters. The view thus entertained may not be right. The point that I make here is that the exhibition of such films will not create any new misimpression regarding Western social life.

Considered from the point of view of the effect of such films on Indian morals, there may exist a case for prohibiting such films, but then a salutary provision may be made that such films may be exhibited only to the adult population. Apart from this, films of daring and adventure for good causes, for scientific and geographical discoveries, for ends of social service, etc., of which incidents abound in Western life and civilization, may be increasingly exhibited in India, which will provide healthy recreation and inculcate in the more impressionable of the audience an emulating desire for imitation.

Lastly, in regard to control, I think that there need be no Board of Censors in each province, but one Central Board for the whole of India would suffice. Of course, in each centre, there must be a whole-time officers as Censor, well-equipped for his task and with an expert staff under him. On the report of the Censor, the Central Board may permit the exhibition of the film, so that the permission may extend to the whole of India at once. With the Censor in each centre may be associated an Advisory Body with some remuneration to the members for attendance at each meeting. I do not think the question of Censorship deserves so great an importance as the Committee seem to be giving to it judged by their questionnaire on this part of their terms of reference. The more important question is the method whereby the Indian film industry can be improved and developed on its technical and artistic side, together with the consideration of the proposal for special encouragement to British Empire films.

**Oral Evidence of Mr. S. G. WARTY, M.A., Honorary Secretary of the Bombay Presidency Postmen's Union, and Editor, "The Postman," on Saturday, the 12th November 1927.**

*Chairman :* Mr. Warty, what are you yourself?

*A.* I am a journalist. Besides that, I am also editing on behalf of the Postmen's Union, a journal called the "Postman."

*Q.* Does the statement which you have submitted contain your personal opinion?

*A.* It is my own personal statement, because I was asked to give evidence as editor of the "Postman." I am before the committee as editor of the "Postman." I have been taking interest in the cinema business, not from a business point of view, but from the point of view of the public.

Q. Are you a cinema critic also?

A. I am not, I do not write critical articles on the cinema.

Q. We have read your statement, and I should like to know something about "Savitri" to which you refer. For how long has that film been here?

A. I think it has been here for the last two years.

Q. Was it produced entirely outside India?

A. Yes, it was made in Italy, altogether by a foreign agency.

Q. You do not know much about it?

A. So far as I could make inquiries, I found that it was done in Italy, all the actors and actresses who took part in it were Italians; the whole production was Italian.

Q. Do you think it conveyed a good impression?

A. Yes, it conveyed a very good impression.

Q. Of course, it must be an appealing story to the Hindu public, and you think it conveyed a very good impression?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think that any Indian had any hand in its production?

A. I can't say that.

Q. Who can give us some information about it? Can you find out and let us know about it?

A. I saw the picture first in the Globe Cinema, and its proprietor might be able to give you some information about it.

Q. How did they create the Indian conditions?

A. I saw Indian conditions in that picture more than any foreign setting. I can't say how they produced such a fine picture.

Q. Do you think that that story was more or less true to Indian ideas?

A. Oh, yes.

Q. Do you think that the Indian films are capable of much improvement?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think they will become more popular with the educated Indians if Indian films are further improved?

A. Yes, they will become more popular, because the educated classes do not visit the cinemas unless the films have some reputation behind them.

Q. Those of the educated classes who now favour the western films might take a bias for Indian films if they are improved?

A. Quite so.

Q. That will be one method of diverting the tastes of the educated Indian from the western films to Indian films?

A. I can't say that, but if Indian films are improved, for which there is ample room, then the educated classes will certainly patronise them more and more.

Q. Do you think it is desirable to improve the Indian films in order to attract the educated classes?

A. Yes.

Q. The Indian films are very popular with the masses of the people, is it not so?

A. Yes.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* Did it strike you that in the picture "Savitri" some of the Indian parts were played by Europeans and that spoiled the beauty of the picture a little?

A. It did not strike me like that. It did not strike as foreign at all. They were acting true to Indian life, in fact even in Indian films there is not such good acting as I saw in the "Savitri."

*Chairman:* You think, therefore, that there is vast scope for improvement and that effective steps should be taken immediately to improve the industry?

A. Yes, I have suggested some of the steps which Government should take.

Q. Do you believe in creating educational facilities for that purpose?

A. I emphasise that point, especially in the mofussil for the education of the ryot in Public Health and so on.

Q. I do not mean that aspect of it. What I mean is, in order to improve the indigenous industry, do you think that scholarships should be awarded to competent science students to study cinema production in America and other places? Would you advocate that?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. You think that educational films and films dealing with agriculture and public health should be produced by Government?

A. Yes.

Q. You also suggest, I see, that Government may also start in the beginning a class in each province for scenario writing for a small number of approved candidates?

A. Wherever you can get a good expert.

Q. Do you think the trade will take advantage of such an expert?

A. I think so.

Q. Will they pay for his services? Some of them said yesterday they would not be prepared to pay him?

A. When they see the advantages of having an expert, they will certainly pay.

Q. Do you think that if a class were started in a High school, it would serve a useful purpose?

A. Of course, if it is started in any recognised High School in a Presidency-town, it might be successful. This subject may be put in the category of vocational instruction, but only well qualified students must be admitted to this course, and not matriculation students. They must be at least university students.

Q. Do you think that students will come forward to take that course?

A. I think so.

Q. Why should not the University undertake it? Are you a Member of the University?

A. I am not a member of the University. I think the University has already got too many things on its hands to think of introducing any new subjects.

Q. It will open up a new field for the educated middle classes, will it not?

A. I understand the University is thinking of opening a class in journalism, and scenario writing may be treated as a part of journalism.

Q. I see that you believe very much in the use of the film for educational purposes, especially in the mofussil?

A. Yes, because the cinema has not yet penetrated into the mofussil at all. In small towns there are no cinemas at all.

Q. You suggest here that the educational films and propaganda films should also contain some plots in order to make them more attractive?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think there are people capable of producing such films?

A. I cannot say if there are such people at present, but I feel confident that people of that type will be forthcoming in course of time.

Q. Have you seen the agricultural films shown by the Railways?

A. I have not seen them. I think they have not been exhibited in Bombay.

Q. Do you think the rural public will pay a small fee for attending such cinema shows, I mean propaganda shows?

A. I don't think they will grudge to pay it provided the amount is small and not on a commercial basis. But at the same time if you make the shows free they won't attach any value to them, so I suggest that a nominal fee should be charged for such propaganda films.

Q. While you approve of the idea in your statement that there should be a free interchange of knowledge between the different parts of the Empire, you think that in the matter of the cinema India is in a weak position and that she should first strengthen her position before she agrees to participate in any scheme for preference for British Empire films?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. And the first step you suggest that Government should take is this, that attention should first be paid to improving the film industry in this country before India participates in the Imperial Preference scheme because you think that the other parts of the empire being better equipped and better developed, you are not able to compete with them on equal terms. Is that your idea?

A. Yes, the indigenous film industry must first be improved.

Q. Now, as regard the effect of these cinema films on the public, you are one of the gentlemen whose opinion may be of value to us. Has the cinema any injurious effect on the Indian public?

A. I don't think so.

Q. There are two ways in which the public can be affected, firstly by seeing in these cinema shows too much of the sex element, they may get demoralised; secondly, it might produce an impression in the Indian mind that the western life is rather loose. These are the two ways in which the Indian public are alleged to be affected by the cinema in this country. What is your opinion on that matter?

A. I think it won't affect the morals of the people here, because the Board of Censors are doing their work quite satisfactorily.

Q. We should like to have your frank opinion on the matter, because you have stated in your statement that "Indians of all classes, and especially the masses even in rural areas are of some vague opinion that constancy in love, chastity and such other womanly virtues are very little prized in the west and that in fact considerable indulgence is allowed in these matters. The view thus entertained may not be right, but the point that I make here is that the exhibition of such films will not create any new impression regarding western social life." Am I correct in understanding from your statement that any impression the people here gather is from what they see of the actual life of the westerner in this country and not from what they see on the screen?

A. Yes, sir. That is so.

Q. Don't you think that impression is emphasised and brought about more prominently by seeing the western life on the screen?

A. It may be so. On the whole, much harm is not done by that.

Q. You think that if such impression is to be corrected, the westerner will have to change his manners here? Is that your idea? (Laughter.) Of course it is not a matter for laughter, and I should like to have your opinion on it.

A. Yes, I think they will have to change their manners here.

Q. For instance, the *Times of India* to-day says: "The main point in this connection is that such misrepresentations of western life damage the interests of the people of India." That is why we want to investigate the matter. ".....There must be a feeling of contempt and antipathy towards these people and their civilization....." Do you think that the

acting in the cinema creates a feeling of contempt or antipathy among the people of India?

A. I don't think so.

Q. Still you admit that there is a sort of belief among the people of this country regarding the westerner that he is more sensual than the easterner to put it bluntly?

A. Yes.

Q. If the cinema emphasises that impression, what do you think should be done in the matter?

A. I think much will depend upon the Board of Censors. It must be left to the Censoring Board, and the British public may also make it a point to produce special films depicting adventures and enterprises not only for India but for the whole of the Empire.

Q. So you think it depends upon Britain to produce attractive pictures, i.e., to depict life in a more wholesome manner?

A. There are certainly many good things in the west, enterprise, adventure and so forth, which India would like to imitate.

Q. As far as I can see what you consider necessary is, first of all the film industry in India should be improved so as to make the Indian films more popular, and secondly the quality of the British films also should be improved so that the British films may compete on equal terms with films of other countries. That is your point, I think?

A. Yes.

*Colonel Crawford:* May I suggest, Mr. Chairman, that we should be careful not to give offence to any community, and that whilst such statements may be freely made to us, the press might be careful in publishing such evidence. It was just stated that a certain community was more sensual than the others and so on. Perhaps the press might exercise their judgment in publishing it.

*Chairman:* We certainly trust to the judgment of the press in reporting.

Now, do you consider that the present machinery for censorship is adequate or satisfactory?

A. I think so, but I would have one Central Board instead of having Provincial Boards.

Q. What I meant was, do you think that inspection of a film by one Inspector alone is a sufficient safeguard to secure adequate censorship?

A. I don't think so.

Q. Do you approve of the idea that each film should be inspected by two or more members of the Board?

A. Yes.

Q. Would you be able to find the number of men willing to undertake such duty in a city like Bombay?

A. I think we should be able to find suitable men provided they are paid properly.

Q. If a film is to be inspected by two or more members of the Board, it may entail work for two or three days in a week if they work at the rate of 4 hours a day?

A. I have no idea about it, but I think we can get men to do the work, from my knowledge of the city.

Q. Do you think the improvement in the direction of having every film inspected by two or more members of the Board will minimise the chances of exhibiting objectionable films?

A. Surely.

Q. From that point of view, even if it costs more money, you think it is an advisable course to adopt?

A. Yes.

*Q.* You advocate a Central Board, but do you realise the difficulties of people in other parts of India. Why not have a Provincial Board in each province? Suppose you have in each province a Provincial Board to deal with censorship, their certificate to have value throughout, unless it is cancelled in a particular locality?

*A.* That will be all right. Instead of having a Central Board, you might have provincial boards and their certificates would do.

*Q.* But subject to the local authorities having the power to suspend in any given case. Do you think that will secure your object?

*A.* I think so.

*Q.* If you want to encourage the growth of the film industry in this country, a Central Board will be a handicap to producers elsewhere other than the place where the Central Board is situated?

*A.* I think so.

*Mr. Green:* I gather from your statement that you consider that the Board of Censors have hitherto done their work satisfactorily?

*A.* Yes, sir.

*Q.* On the other hand you would prefer every film should be examined by members of the Board itself?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* You consider that it would be better that the present system should be continued?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Are you by any chance aware of the qualifications of the present salaried officials of the Board, that is to say, the Secretary, the Inspector and so on?

*A.* I have got only some idea about it.

*Q.* You are probably aware that both have some high educational qualifications including, in one case, an English degree and that they both have been overseas?

*A.* I know that.

*Q.* Do you think it is easy to get a panel of censors, gentlemen from Bombay, who would have equally good qualifications?

*A.* I think so.

*Q.* And in sufficient numbers to carry out 9 or 8 hours work a week?

*A.* I think so.

*Q.* You think the selection of members from that panel to examine particular films would not take so long as to embarrass the owners of the films?

*A.* I don't think so.

*Q.* You think that within three or four days every film can be examined?

*A.* Only special fees must be given, otherwise people won't be forthcoming.

*Q.* Have you any idea what fees would be required by people of the qualifications that the Board's present men possess for doing 6 hours work in a week, or two hours a day for three days?

*A.* I think you could get them for Rs. 75 per week.

*Colonel Crawford:* I notice in your written statement you say that there is unlimited scope for the development of the film industry in this country, and you go on to say that the cinema has touched so far only the principal cities but the district towns remain untouched. Have you any evidence which you could give to the Committee to show that the display of cinema films in the smaller towns would be a paying proposition?

*A.* I have no evidence to show it, but I know from my inquiries that it will be a paying proposition.

**Q.** You complain of the lack of the technique of the Indian industry at the present moment and go on to say how the Italian film known as the "Savitri" was exhibited in Bombay successfully, and that the scenes displayed in it were undoubtedly superior to any of the Indian-produced scenes. Do you consider that it would be an encouragement to the Indian cinema industry if foreign companies were allowed to start taking films in India?

**A.** I don't think so. They would not be encouraged by imitation.

**Q.** Would it assist India in any way if such productions are undertaken with a view to international distribution?

**A.** I don't think so. I would rather leave it in the hands of the Indian industry.

**Q.** You speak of the possibility of protecting the film industry. Do you consider the Indian film industry should be considered to be a luxury industry?

**A.** I don't think the film industry requires any special protection in the present circumstances. I am definitely against giving any special protection to the film industry.

**Q.** You suggest in one place that Government might take the initiative in the matter. Do you think the industry should have preference over the other needs of the country?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Has the country got all the money that it requires for nation-building activities?

**A.** I think industrial advance is one of the functions of Government and the Provincial Government might very well undertake the expenditure. They have already instituted scholarships in other departments of industry.

**Q.** You think there is adequate money for all your needs at the moment?

**A.** I think so. And this won't require much money; and this industry must also have a share in whatever is going.

**Q.** When you definitely come down to the point of view of education, have you enough money for all the education that you require to-day?

**A.** I think Government must subsidise this industry.

**Q.** Then you advocate that a proportion of your finances at present available for education should be spent definitely for the encouragement of the film industry?

**A.** After studying the financial condition of Bombay, I think, Government can well afford to do it.

**Q.** Do you mean visual instruction should take precedence over primary education?

**A.** It is a part of education.

**Q.** If you have only got a certain amount of money available, how can you do it?

**A.** I think there will be sufficient money available.

**Q.** If you have only a certain amount of money available, would you spend it on primary education or on visual instruction?

**A.** I would spend it on this, because this is also a part of education. I prefer visual instruction to primary education, I don't make any distinction between the two. But I would not divert any money from the present educational funds, but I should like to have additional funds. I would not divert any money specially set apart for educational purposes. Nor would I support additional taxation for that purpose.

**Q.** I note you are in favour of displaying Empire films in the various countries of the empire showing the different customs and manners of the people of the different portions of the empire to one another so that India may make herself better known in the empire?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Have you any suggestions to make as to how that can be brought about?

**A.** By an interchange of films, and also by improving the Indian films.

**Q.** Do you think that the Indian-produced films are sufficiently good in technique?

**A.** I don't think the present films will attract large audiences outside India.

**Q.** What steps would you suggest for the improvement of the technique of the industry?

**A.** I have suggested that students should be sent to England or America to study the technique of the cinema, and secondly Government should also subsidise the industry, and thirdly, special classes should be started in scenario writing.

**Q.** What do you think of the proposition that an expert should be brought out from abroad to train Indians?

**A.** Yes, I would welcome that suggestion. I would also like to send capable Indians abroad by giving them scholarships.

**Q.** You say that you are not aware of any film misrepresentation of western civilisation in India, and yet you consider that a bad impression is created in India regarding the customs of the west. Do you consider the present films give a correct impression of the west?

**A.** No, I don't think so, because that does not tally with what I have read in novels.

**Q.** Is there any misrepresentation going on of the western people?

**A.** But the impression so created is created by the lives which some Europeans in India lead.

**Q.** You say that the impression is gained by Indians from what they see of Europeans themselves. How many of the 320 millions of the people of India actually come in contact with Europeans?

**A.** In the villages they always see European ladies and gentlemen.

**Q.** What is the particular thing that gives the people of this country a wrong impression about the western people?

**A.** There is the free association between the sexes, sometimes bad lives are led by some people. In my own district I have myself seen many things which are certainly objectionable.

*Chairman:* What is the actual thing that you consider bad?

**A.** I have come in contact with many Europeans, and I have often found very good gentlemen, but in districts there are some people who lead lives which do not do credit to the British people.

*Colonel Crawford:* You are in favour of seeing that no community is misrepresented, and you want to prevent misrepresentation?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You don't think it is possible that what is shown in the films is a correct representation of what is going on in the west?

**A.** The only misrepresentation is about the sexes, and I have therefore suggested that such films should only be shown to the adult population.

**Q.** Do you think it will have any demoralising effect on them?

**A.** I don't think so. But from what I read in the newspapers of police court cases, it may have some effect, but such things occur very rarely. On the whole, the Board of Censors is doing its duty properly in this matter.

**Q.** You are quite satisfied with the moral standards of the films shown?

**A.** I don't say that the moral standard is quite good.

**Q.** You say in one place "considering the point of view, there may exist a case for prohibiting such films."



A. It is the duty of the censors to stop undesirable films, because there may be a few sex films imported from America, and it is for the censors to stop such films. But I have not seen such films so far exhibited.

Q. But how is it you make this statement? I thought you had made this suggestion after what you had seen in one of the cinemas?

A. I am thinking more of the future possibility, and not from what I have seen. In fact, I have not so far seen any such film.

Q. Do you consider that journalism can assist in raising the standard of the films shown in any way?

A. I think so.

Q. How? You mean by criticising the films from time to time?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you get an opportunity to criticise the films?

A. I have not yet criticised any of the films. My own paper does not do anything of that kind. I am a contributor to many other papers and I am also a correspondent of some of the British papers, but I don't criticise any films.

Q. You don't get any advertisements from cinema companies?

A. No.

Mr. Neogy: I take it you are anxious to bring about a better understanding between the different parts of the empire. Do you think that the people inhabiting the other parts of the empire are quite as anxious to understand India as Indians are to understand the other parts?

A. I have no information on that point.

Q. You say that the Government is not so solicitous about interpreting India truly to the rest of the empire as about interpreting the rest of the empire to India? That is to say, you do not look to the cinema to further assist the Government of India in this matter of carrying on propaganda in India?

A. Quite so.

Q. All that you need is that India should be better understood in the other parts of the empire and you would look to the cinema to work in that direction?

A. Yes.

Q. Don't you think it is a sort of propaganda which cannot be successful unless the Government of India press upon the Governments of the other parts of the empire to undertake it, so that with the assistance of the Dominion Governments the sort of propaganda that you have in mind may be successfully carried on in those parts of the empire?

A. I think it is the duty of the Government of India.

Q. You are not prepared to depend on the trade doing the propaganda for India, in the other parts of the empire?

A. No, I don't think that the trade would be effective enough in that direction.

Q. And unless the quality of the Indian pictures is so high that they would on their own merits command a market overseas, you can never expect the trade to assist you on this direction in the slightest degree?

A. I think so.

Q. You don't think that there is a possibility of Indians turning out pictures of such high quality in the near future which would draw large audiences outside India?

A. I don't think we will be able to do it under present conditions.

Q. You are a believer in the cinema as an engine for the spread of education?

A. Yes.

**Q.** When you use the term education, I suppose you use it in the widest sense?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Do you think that education in the broadest sense of the term would include a study of the life and customs of the various parts of the world, and the different civilizations that we find in the world?

**A.** Yes, but so far as India is concerned I think the educational films may first be devoted to public health.

**Q.** Is there any necessity from the point of view of education to give any particular preference to the empire films? Would you, for instance, shut out films depicting the conditions of life say in Russia or France or Germany? Would not that be of educational value to Indians?

**A.** I don't think there is any need to bring them now, because we can have our own educational films in India.

**Q.** Education in the widest sense of the term includes a study of the life and customs and manners of the people inhabiting the different parts of the world, and you would not be prepared to make any distinction between the different parts of the world?

**A.** I should not make any distinction.

**Q.** Just as you are anxious to bring about a better understanding between India and the Empire, are you also anxious that India should understand her neighbouring countries? Do you think that films representing life in Afghanistan or Persia or China or Japan would be of value to India?

**A.** I think so.

**Q.** So I take it there is no reason for you to keep out the other countries from any scheme of reciprocity that you have in mind?

**A.** No.

**Mr. Cootman:** I take it that you are here to represent the views of the general public and as an ordinary citizen?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And you have no interest in the industry itself?

**A.** No.

**Q.** Now, please tell me which class of film do you see often, the foreign film or the Indian film?

**A.** I see both.

**Q.** But which do you see oftener?

**A.** Indian films.

**Q.** Why?

**A.** I can't say why.

**Q.** Do you see Indian films because you have to pay less for tickets?

**A.** That may be one of the reasons, and also because I should like to see how far our own productions are progressing.

**Q.** On the whole, you do see Indian films oftener than English films?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Do you notice any striking difference between the get up and the technique of the two? Which is better?

**A.** The English or the foreign films are decidedly better.

**Q.** Do you like the subjects of the foreign films?

**A.** I like them fairly well.

**Q.** Do you like the subjects of the Indian films better?

**A.** Not all.

**Q.** I should like you to think a little more closely and give me your reasons why you see Indian films oftener than you see the foreign films.

Has the difference in the price of admission got anything to do with it? Is that really the determining factor?

A. Not so far as the educated classes are concerned. The price of admission does not affect them. They visit theatres where English and Indian films are shown.

Q. Let us take your postal employees. I take it that the people who get low pay visit Indian theatres oftener than the theatres where foreign films are shown? Do you know anything about their motives? Is the difference in price a serious item in their case?

A. It is one of the considerations; another thing is, the Indian theatres where Indian films are shown are situated in the Indian locality and they are very near to their places.

Q. Suppose the prices of admission were the same in both cases. Where do you think the low-paid or uneducated Indian would prefer to go to?

A. People generally like mythological pictures, and for that reason they generally visit Indian theatres.

Q. I was very much interested in what you wrote about Empire films and so on. Suppose you were given a free pass for two entertainments, one where there was a picture depicting a scene in South Africa and the second was a picture depicting scenes and conditions in California, which would you prefer to see?

A. I would prefer the Empire film; I am not sure about it, because if California depicts better pictures, then I might go and see them, but, as a rule, I should prefer British Empire films.

Q. Well now, let me take the point that my friend, Mr. Neogy, took up. You said in reply to his question that it would be desirable to show the life and customs and manners of the people of India to their neighbours. I agree with you. But do you think it is as valuable that you should know what goes on in Persia and understand the Persians and their mode of life, or is it more valuable to see the customs and habits of the people in Great Britain and other parts of the Empire?

A. I think it will be more valuable to know things regarding our own Empire first, because I claim to be a member of the British Empire.

Q. And you would like Indian films to be shown to the rest of the inhabitants of the empire by means of the Indian-produced films exported to other parts with the consent of the Government?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you feel strongly on that point?

A. Yes, I feel very strongly on it, especially after the publication of Miss Mayo's book.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* You say you are very anxious that the Indian film industry should be developed. Do you advocate that the entertainment tax collected should be devoted to giving scholarships to students to be sent abroad to study the technique of the cinema?

A. I have no objection to it. But I do not know whether it is to be ear-marked; in any case I have no objection if money were set apart for giving scholarships and so forth. Money may be given from the general funds, and no special tax should be imposed on the people.

Q. You know there are some very undesirable films shown in India. Is it due to the laxity of censorship here?

A. I have not yet seen any undesirable films exhibited in Bombay.

Q. Do you prefer that such films should be first censored by the High Commissioner for India in England instead of censoring them here?

A. I should rather prefer that such films should be censored in India.

**Q.** Would you advocate the appointment of a lady Member on the Censoring Board?

**A.** Yes, I would like a lady member on the Board.

**Q.** Do you know of any case of films imported into India which have not been censored?

**A.** I do not know of any such films.

**Q.** What do you mean by adults? What should be the age of children who should not be allowed to visit cinemas?

**A.** Children below the age of 16 should not be allowed in cinemas.

**Q.** Do you think that besides the films, posters and advertisements should also be censored?

**A.** I think censorship should be extended to posters and advertisements as well.

**\*Oral Evidence of Miss RUBY MYERS, Film-Actress, Imperial Film Co., on Saturday, the 12th November 1927.**

*Chairman:* Miss Myers, you have not favoured us with any written statement.

**A.** No.

**Q.** How long have you been in the profession?

**A.** Two years.

**Q.** And had you any training before you entered the profession?

**A.** No, I had no training.

**Q.** What were you doing before you entered the profession—if you don't mind my putting the question?

**A.** I was in the telephone office.

**Q.** Do you think it will be an advantage if we had some institution where training could be given to actors and actresses?

**A.** I think it would be a very good thing.

**Q.** Do you think there are many girls in Bombay who would be willing to come forward? You are fairly familiar with Bombay?

**A.** Very familiar.

**Q.** You come in contact with quite a number of girls of respectable Indian families?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Do you consider that, if a training class were opened, respectable girls and boys belonging to respectable families would join the profession?

**A.** Well, they would, if the cinema industry would rise.

**Q.** I suppose the cinema industry in the country is becoming more and more popular?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Not only foreign films but also Indian films?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And I understand from witnesses who have come before us that the Indian films are getting more and more popular with the Indian public?

**A.** Quite so.

**Q.** And what do you think should be done to make it more attractive?

**A.** Well, I think if we were financed properly—(The remainder of Miss Myers evidence was taken in camera).

**Written Statement by Mr. I. K. YAJNIK, Editor of the "Hindustan"  
and "Praja Mitra", dated the 11th November 1927.**

1. It is with very great hesitation that I make bold to tender my evidence before this Committee. For while I have been seeing foreign films during last ten years or more, I have devoted special attention to them and particularly studied the Indian Films and the methods of producing them during the last three years. I have written a few Cinema Stories and Scenarios and am fairly acquainted with the working of the various Studios and Cinemas in the city.

I will now submit my answers on such select questions on which I feel some confidence in expressing my opinions.

13. This question divides itself in 3 parts which I will take up *Serialim*.

(i) The present Custom Tariff on exposed Films is indeed ridiculously low and unduly favours the exhibitors of Foreign Films. I do not indeed object to the percentage—which is fixed at 15 at present—of the duty levied on these films. But then the present method of valuing all films, whether they are Million Dollar productions or second or third run old films at the rate of 4 annas a foot is indeed ridiculous. I have therefore, no hesitation in agreeing with the just demand made on behalf of the Producers Association, to value all foreign films at the minimum rate of Rs. 2-8 per foot, so that they may not unduly compete with Indian Films which on an average cost Rs. 20,000 for 8 reels.

(ii) It is hardly necessary to point out that the Present Custom Tariff on foreign films operates to the serious disadvantage of the indigenous films, and therefore it must be raised to the degree mentioned above in order to protect in some measure the local industry.

(iii) Then again, all duty on raw films, chemicals, etc., must be completely abolished with a view to give an impetus to the production of Indian Films.

16. I regret to differ from many local authorities on this question. For while I hold that there is enough talent in the country to give us ultimately the very best scenario-writers, directors, camera-men, actors and actresses, I cannot help deploring the lack of qualified men and women in these departments at present.

I would attribute these deficiencies to the following reasons:—

- (1) For centuries past, theatre and stage have somehow come to be considered something disreputable amongst the higher classes of society. Hence the modern cinema has been handicapped by the taint attributed to all stage-work.
- (2) Then the films, unlike the stage, almost at its very inception began to engage girls for acting female parts and the industry though economically profitable is deemed something very unclean even by shrewd capitalists, as the actresses have, in the present circumstances of our society, to be largely drawn from the disreputable classes.
- (3) The modern moving pictures do represent a science, an art and an industry. Unfortunately, it is largely viewed as a good business at present and hence not enough care is taken to develop it on technical and artistic lines. So, our pictures are produced largely with a view to interest the large masses of society and hence compare very unfavourably with the foreign pictures as real cultural attractions.
- (4) All these reasons keep down the industry from rising to the high position it enjoys in other countries and prevent it from having the benefits of the vast capital which alone can place it on a higher level.

I shall now suggest some measures for supplying these deficiencies:—

- (1) It is high time I think that our producers realised the sad deficiencies of our technical departments, and the urgent necessity of importing some trained camera men and laboratory-men and even some technical directors to raise the whole technique of our pictures to a higher level.
- (2) At the same time studios and laboratories must be fitted up on a superior level, so as to get best results out of this foreign assistance. I need hardly add that such foreigners will be required only in the initial stages till a large staff of local men are trained here under their direction or in foreign countries.
- (3) Some world-famous subjects should be selected. For I am convinced that educated people in India, will be interested in this industry when modern or ancient Classics are adapted to the screen and the halcyon days of India's past glory are vividly depicted on the screen in a fitting manner. Only then will Indian pictures be shown in foreign countries and will make bumper profits and thus draw the required capital for the industry.
- (4) I am sure there will be no dearth of ladies and gentlemen from the best walks of life to act for such pictures. But there is one condition that the producers will have to observe in the matter. They will have to select the whole cast of such artists for some special pictures or for the select studies on the new basis, so as to create a new atmosphere, intellectual, emotional and artistic for creation of new pictures.

18. This industry must primarily develop on its own basis and should not depend merely on Government's support. Under the present circumstances of this national industry, however, Government can I think, if it is so inclined, assist in one way. It can start or it can arrange with the New British Empire Film Combine to start an up-to-date studio, with a modern laboratory and some highly trained directors, camera-men and a laboratory at a selected place in the country. They can easily get the best scenarios and educated men and women to act for the screen and they can easily produce pictures, which will have a world market. And, after the benefits of these new methods are brought home to the minds of Indian producers, Government can easily withdraw from active business by either selling away the studio to some local company or renting it to some producers for particular periods or pictures.

I do not think any other Government action is needed in the matter.

22 I do not think that India should adopt any policy of giving preference to the British Empire Pictures, for I believe that all pictures should run on their own merits in this country irrespective of the country of their origin.

32. I do not think that the present system of censoring in our province is satisfactory. I have to make the following suggestions in the matter:—

- (1) In the first place, I think the present Cinema Act must be overhauled, so as to divest Government of its arbitrary authority of nominating all the members on the Censor-Board. In my opinion, only one-third of the members of the Board should be nominated by the Government, one or two members outside the trade should be elected by the industry and the rest should be elected by the local Legislative Council.
- (2) The secretary and supervisor of films must then be chosen by the Board, so as to make them feel responsible not towards Government but towards people and the industry.
- (3) I entirely agree with the suggestion that all films should be examined not by one supervisor as at present, but by sub-committees of the Board.

- (4) The Censor-Board should take the Producers and the Exhibitors into confidence and must discuss objectionable points in films before rejecting them in toto.
- (5) There ought to be an All-India Censor Board to be constituted on the same lines as I have indicated for the Provincial boards, with the obvious difference, that the Indian Legislatures should elect a suitable number of members on the Board. The All-India Board will not only examine all foreign films, but also hear and decide appeals that may be preferred against the decisions of the Provincial Boards regarding Indian Films.
- (6) The Censor-Board at present make very invidious distinctions between Indian and Foreign Films, and insist on cutting out such scenes and actions such as are very common in foreign pictures. Censor Boards in future must be instructed to judge both types of films by the same standard.

**Oral Evidence of Mr. I. K. YAJNIK, Editor of the " Hindustan " and " Praja Mitra ", on Saturday, the 12th November 1927.**

*Chairman:* I understand, Mr. Yajnik, you are the editor of a paper in Bombay?

A. Yes. I am the editor of the " Hindustan " and " Praja Mitra ", which is an evening Gujarati paper. I am also the editor of the Gujarati " Kesari ", and of another weekly paper which is chiefly devoted to articles on cinema and theatres, that is the Praja Mitra and the Parsi.

*Q.* Do you devote a whole page or a column?

A. There is certainly a full page which is entirely devoted to cinema subjects. There are also articles translated from one or two English papers and published in our paper, and sometimes some articles are also published from contributors on cinemas and theatres.

*Q.* So you have been interesting yourself in one way or other with foreign films for 10 years?

A. That was of course merely as a cinema goer. But I have been particularly interested since I took to scenario writing about three years ago. I am doing it still and am getting more work now than before.

*Q.* How many story writers are there?

A. You can count the really good story writers on your finger tips. Of course there are many people who write stories and send them to studios in the hope of getting a good remuneration. Supposing as a literary man I write a good novel which will keep me busy for a month or so. I could hardly expect any remuneration at all for it. On the other hand, I should have to undergo some expense for publishing it after writing out the story, whereas if I gave it to a picture producing company and if they accepted it as the basis for a scenario, I could expect a good start and I could always expect good money on such writings.

*Q.* You merely started with scenario writing or had you any previous training in the line?

A. As a matter of fact, I am a Gujarati writer of stories. I wrote some stories before and when I wrote those stories I dreamt of different scenes, and I felt some confidence and took up the line. But for the last ten years or more I have been a writer of Gujarati articles, etc. I have also been interesting myself in public life.

*Q.* Is there a very good supply of story writers for Indian films?

A. We have a good many stories pouring in, but I cannot say that we have a good supply of good stories coming to us.

*Q.* What do you suggest should be done to improve that?

A. I think the stories can only improve with the improvement of the industry as a whole. It is only when the whole industry is completely overhauled, and a new era can be inaugurated and we can have better brains and better scenario writers. The unfortunate fact at present is that high class cultured stories would not appeal to the producers, because they generally want to produce pictures which would appeal readily to the illiterate and uncultured classes. I don't say that they don't produce better pictures, at all. But as they want to produce pictures to appeal to the crude sense of the lower classes, I am afraid there is not much chance, at the present moment, for better writers and some of us who tried to get into this line are faced with this difficulty of adapting our high literary standards to a certain extent if not completely to the lower taste that prevails among the cinema audiences.

Q. What does the audience care for more, that is, to say, do they care more for the subject or for the method of acting?

A. What I say is that unless there is a good bit of excitement like a race or plenty of warlike scenes or what they call 'Maramari', some tumult and bustle and things of that sort in the stories, they are not popular with the producers of films. For instance, "Nethaji Palka" of the Maharashtra Film Co., was very popular and went for five weeks. Of course, it was produced by one of the ablest companies that we have in India. But there is no concealing the fact that it really surpassed all the previous films made by that company, because it contained lots of warlike paraphernalia and a lot of excitement. We have also another film called "At the Clang of Fetters" produced by the Krishna Co. I don't want to depreciate the merit of that film, because the story has been written by one of the ablest Gujarati writers in Calcutta, but still, whatever the merits of the story may be, according to higher standards it would not have been so popular as it has proved to be, but for the extraordinary military parades, exhibition of arms and gun firing that is embodied in the picture.

Q. You think that it is really difficult to improve the tone of the story writing?

A. Not exactly that, because we have recently had another success with a picture called "Gun Sundari", and in this picture there were no warlike scenes. Yet it was a very great success. It ran for 3 weeks largely on account of the good acting of the heroine and also on account of the intrinsic merit of the story which depicted the higher quality of Indian womanhood. It was produced by the Kohinoor Film Co. We can certainly arrange to show it to you. This film was a great success, partly because some borrowed light was reflected on that picture by the very name 'Gun Sundari' or "Why Husbands go astray?" which is really borrowed from a very popular Gujarati novel.

Q. What do you think should be done to improve the indigenous industry?

A. In the first place, our industry is very faulty on the technical side. I think you have seen some studios, and I should think it should be common ground that we should have better equipped studios and better equipped laboratories, and all technical arrangements must be improved enormously if this industry is to make any great strides in the future.

Q. I see you suggest that Government may start a good studio. I put it to the producers yesterday, but they would not look at it?

A. The producers are committed to the present order of things, and my little experience bears me out when I say that if we could produce world subjects or classical subjects with better technical equipment, we shall have no difficulty at all in finding a foreign market for the films. We had recently a concrete instance of it in the picture called "The Light of Asia". It was surprising to know that it was produced in a far off place like Delhi by the Great Eastern Corporation, and it was really surprising to find that some gentlemen in Delhi had the imagination and insight to



produce a world picture of this kind with really better technical equipment. Even this picture would never have succeeded if they had not taken good technical advice and assistance which they managed to get from a German Film Company at Munich and they produced this picture in partnership with this company. But the scenario writing was done by Niranjan Pal, son of Mr. Bipin Chandra Pal. Niranjan Pal is also a great dramatist. He produced a drama that was staged in London and it was very much appreciated there. What I mean to say is, the original subject was Indian, the scenario writing was done by an Indian, but as soon as it came to photography and direction and laboratory work, assistance was taken from foreigners. A contingent of camera men, directors and others came out to India and they co-operated with the literary talent and the local knowledge of this Indian Company, and they all went to a location which was generously provided by the Maharaja of Jaipur and produced a very good picture indeed. I don't say that it was not faulty, because Mr. Pal had not much training in this line. With all the defects of the scenario and the story, the film could have been improved with a little better imagination. This picture was a great success not only in India, but all over the continent. I understand it was shown for nearly three weeks in London. I am afraid the Indian Director did not do his work properly, but the photography was really excellent. If it had been taken by Indians only the whole thing would have been spoiled. Not only was the negative taken in Germany, but it was printed in Germany. Of course, it was also first released in Germany and then the film was sent elsewhere, and at last it came to India. What I mean is, that this picture shows that there is really great scope for the combination of Indian literary genius with the best technical direction and photography. I am laying very great emphasis on photography and laboratory work as well as on direction, and there are certain technical parts of the direction work in which assistance can very well be taken from foreigners.

There is one other point, Sir. Not only was there technical talent, not only was a world subject chosen, but considerable care was taken in selecting the artists, and that is one of the points that I have to mention. If they had merely gone round and collected such good artists, actors and actresses as they could find in the present studios, I am afraid they would never have made the success of the picture what it was. But they took care to take the help of cultured artists and high class people like Mrs. Rajam, a sister of Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, who took part in that picture. I also understood from Mr. Sarma, who was one of the directors of the company, that he had the assistance of several Madrassi graduate girls and other educated ladies and gentlemen from different parts of India in producing that picture. From that point of view, I must say that "The Light of Asia" really reached the high water mark, because I do not think that any other picture could be proud of such a high class cultured set of actors and actresses. I understand the Committee has been worried about this matter. It is my deliberate opinion that you cannot mix up the two sets of people, and I am afraid in the present atmosphere of the studios, you will not be able to get ladies and gentlemen of culture and education to work in them. It is really impossible to expect such people to come and take part in the studios.

Q. Have you any experience of the present studios?

A. I am going round the studios almost every day. It is not the fault of anybody. What I mean is, they have to employ girls who go to the studios in search of work. It is no fault of anybody, it is only an accident. But this is the condition of things that prevails.

Q. Those gentlemen and ladies who took part in "The Light of Asia" merely did their work and went away, and you don't think they will again come and take part?

A. The cast was really chosen for this picture. Mr. Sarma told me that they went round the whole of India in search of a girl to play the part

of the heroine, and after some difficulty they fixed upon a girl who was only 14 years old and who had casually replied to their advertisement. Even after she had left "The Light of Asia" she was quite prepared to work for them on a comparatively small salary even though better offers were made to her by other companies, but she stuck to the Great Eastern Corporation till finally it was clear that they could not produce any more pictures.

*Q.* Was it not a success?

*A.* "The Light of Asia" was of course a great success, but there were some business complications or some sort of disputes in the management, and a lot of money was also wasted or swallowed by some one, I think, and so they evidently could not run the business. I myself had great hopes about that Corporation, because it was reported that they were going to produce another picture called "Taj Mahal" relating to the zenith of the Moghul civilization. But unfortunately it did not happen. The next great success from my point of view has been scored in India by the film called "Sacrifice".

*Q.* Do you think that well equipped studios with all modern conveniences will be taken advantage of by the producers?

*A.* The present managers and proprietors of the studios have shown some aversion to it. What I do feel is that new companies will be started, and a better class of financiers will come into this business if they see some prospect of putting this industry on an international level. What we really want is good financiers who finance the big mills. We want them to come into this line, and they will not get into this trade unless they see before them something of a really elevating and instructive character.

*Q.* What do you suggest should be done to attract good financiers?

*A.* Some people with more insight and imagination who will see the profits involved should be induced to interest themselves in this trade so that they may start really good and up-to-date studios. Or as it was suggested to me some time ago by Sir Chunilal Setalvad, an up-to-date studio should be started, a British Empire Film Combine, the idea of which was really developed in London. They were willing to start their own studio here and bring out all the technical equipments necessary, if some financiers in India came forward to work in partnership. It would have proved a great success. But of course the local people are showing a certain amount of aversion to this form of partnership. But some pioneering work will have to be done by somebody, I mean the gentlemen who have produced "Sacrifice" might be persuaded to float a joint stock company.

*Q.* We are out to find some practical measures for a foundation, and we should like to have some practical suggestions. You are merely making general statements. What is it that should be done, either by Government or by others, which would go to improve the industry?

*A.* I think the Government might start a studio and a laboratory, in the first instance as an educational institution, as a cinematograph institution.

*Q.* What will be the cost of it?

*A.* That, of course, I am unable to say. I would not speak about the business side of it.

*Q.* We were told yesterday that a good studio, well equipped to be of real use, would cost a crore of rupees.

*A.* A crore? That is more than I can say. It might start in the initial stages as an educational or a pioneering institution, and then I am quite sure that it will be taken fullest advantage of in the very near future.

*Q.* I am sure Mr. Green will take you over the customs aspect about which you have made some statements. Any other measures you suggest in order to improve those defects in the technique and artistic lines?

A. I think it must be largely left to the producers themselves. They should have the insight and imagination necessary for the purpose. Excuse me for interrupting you, but what I have suggested in the way of Government measures is only as a last resort, because I do believe it is up to these people to educate themselves and to do the pioneering work themselves.

Q. But how to make them do it?

A. Some of them, I find, are not even aware of the technical defects and are quite pleased with the situation that exists. That is rather surprising, because I should have thought that seeing American pictures and other foreign pictures now and again they should be quite aware of the fact that their studios and their laboratories could never hope to produce.

Q. I suppose they are content with the profits they make as conditions are?

A. I do not know about the profits because some studios are closing now and again and we always hear about financial difficulties though, of course, it does appear that some pictures do make profits. There is a mystery that I am afraid I cannot solve. While the industry does appear to be profitable in certain respects some studios and some companies are closing down and new ones are starting in their place.

Q. Do you think that films produced in the country now or likely to be produced in the near future, can compete on equal terms with the films produced, say, in Great Britain or other parts of the Empire?

A. I think the markets are quite different. In the present conditions the markets for these are fairly different. The market for foreign films and the market for Indian films are fairly different. Of course, as I have pointed out, there are no watertight compartments and if a better class of pictures could be produced in India, then, there might be a certain amount of competition between the two. I believe that the producers are now gradually coming to realise the necessity of producing a higher class of subjects with better technique and so on.

Q. Don't you think that any reciprocal agreement between the various parts of the Empire would help the industry in India?

A. I do not think so.

Q. Why not?

A. Because I think our pictures will really go on their own merits if they are to go at all to foreign countries. I do not believe in artificial spoon feeding at all.

Q. You do not believe in entering into any arrangement or a reciprocal agreement that, say, for every two feet of Indian film taken India should take one foot of British film?

A. I am afraid it will not work, and it would not be helpful to the industry.

Q. Now let us come to censorship. You seem not to be satisfied with the present method of censoring?

A. When I say I am not satisfied, I meant to say that there is scope for great improvement.

Q. You suggest a method of electing one-third by somebody.

A. I am very emphatically opposed to the present method by which the Government nominates all the members of the Censorship Board. I think that is wrong, because what happens thereby is that it is almost held as Government patronage and people get into this Board who are not well acquainted with the industry or competent to judge the relative merits of films.

Q. Do you think that every film should be seen by more than one member of the Board?

A. I do not think it should be seen by one permanent supervisor. That vests too much power in the hands of a man however good and noble he may be.

Q. You think there should be a panel from which members should be drawn to inspect.....

A. That is the view of Mr. Munim which he gave in a press interview.

Q. What is your view?

A. That is my view.

Q. You advocate both a Central Board and provincial boards. What is your object?

A. I want provincial boards and, an appeal will lie to the central board.

Q. As an appellate authority?

A. Yes.

Q. You do not want an appeal to the Local Government, but to the central board which should hear appeals from the provincial boards?

A. I think a central board constituted on the lines I have mentioned would be better than the Local Government.

Q. I notice your City Corporation excused itself on the ground of want of time in connection with the enquiries of this Committee. Do you think the Legislative Council will find time.....

A. The Legislative Council will only elect some people.

Q. Some members of their own?

A. Not exactly from among themselves. They may elect from outside people who may be competent to do this work.

Q. Do you think that there is sufficient public interest to get people to take interest in that sort of work?

A. I think the interest is gradually increasing. Besides, I would certainly suggest that some kind of honorarium, such as they give to the directors for attending directors' meetings, should be given to the members of the board who examine films.

Q. I can understand your advocating a board, but the method by which you seek to secure the appointment to that board seems to be somewhat cumbersome. You want a certain proportion to be nominated and a certain proportion to be elected.

A. That happens in the Legislative Council, the local boards and municipalities and I do not see that it is cumbersome.

Q. Do you not think that the work of censoring is a purely administrative work?

A. It is getting somewhat political in certain respects and.....

Q. What little politics there are, could they not be secured by having a board in which there are people who will protect your political interest?

A. But I don't want members who are all nominated by Government. Besides, if the Board is elected partly by the Legislative Council, the members of the Board will feel a certain amount of responsibility towards the Council and the people.

Q. Has there been any criticism about the Board hitherto in the press?

A. No.

Q. Or is it only the appointment of this Committee that has brought about some criticism of the Board?

A. I have personally been holding these opinions since I got to know something about it.

Q. Can you point to any criticism of the existing machinery before the appointment of this Committee?

A. No, I am afraid I cannot point out any.

Q. That shows that there is satisfaction.

A. I am afraid the reason is different, because the members of the trade are very reticent in the matter of the censor, though they do not always see eye to eye with him.

Q. You said there was some politics about it?

A. The public would not get to know anything about the working of this machinery unless the people in the trade informed them about it. And the people in the trade are interested in keeping back everything because they are personally dealing with the censor every time.

Q. I suppose you know that the results of the censorship are published in the local gazette?

A. Yes, but that is not clearly brought to the notice of the public unless the trade people themselves comment on it.

Q. Unless the trade people themselves complain about it?

A. Yes. It is up to the trade people and the association to complain. I have sometimes talked to them. They say, "What is the use of doing it? We might come in for more harassment next time".

Q. That is the reason why there has been no complaint hitherto?

A. Yes.

Q. Any way you would advocate an improvement in the existing machinery?

A. Yes. I think the supervisor and the Secretary also must be elected. I do not know about the present machinery. Unfortunately I could not get a copy of the Cinema Act as I understand it is not in stock.

Q. You believe in the executive officer being chosen by election?

A. Yes, by the Board itself. Or if he is already appointed by the Board, it should have the right of dismissing him by a majority of two-thirds or three-fourths.

Mr. Green: Dismissing whom?

A. Dismissing the executive officer.

Q. May I tell you that the Bombay Board appoint him and naturally have power to dismiss both the Secretary and the Supervisor. It is their own appointment.

A. In that case I have nothing more to say.

Q. You told the President just now that you were opposed to any artificial spoon feeding. I quite agree with you in that. At the same time you wish the custom tariff to be raised very considerably.

A. Yes.

Q. With the object of protecting the industry?

A. In the first place, in the interests of justice and equity. It is really preposterous that these films should be valued at four annas a foot.

Q. We had a witness yesterday and he agreed with me that the reason why the western films come into India at what appears to be a low rate is that they have mass production. In America they turn out so many copies of a particular film, so many positives, that the overhead charges can be divided up over that great number and it therefore reduces the price of the copy.

A. But not to this extent.

Q. That is another point. They say that many western films, American in particular, by the time they leave America, in view of their huge home market, have made their profit already and they can therefore sell them quite cheaply abroad.

A. If they just showed the invoice prices you would find that it does not work out at four annas a foot but more than that.

Q. I can tell you something about that. The reason why a tariff valuation was fixed was very largely because of the immense difficulty of ascertaining the real cost. The invoices show the actual cost they may be paying for the time being, but they do not show the royalties that may be paid either before or after or the share of the profits that they make. I am not suggesting that four annas is high enough, but I am only explaining

to you the difficulty. Before we go further, you are not satisfied with the present standard of production in India?

A. No. I am not satisfied.

Q. We have been told by a number of gentlemen that though they substantially agree with you there, still these indifferent films have a market sufficient to remunerate the producer and therefore the producer is not very anxious to produce a better class of films. You would prefer better films to be shown?

A. Yes.

Q. If we give a high tariff protection : could not there be some risk that the Indian producer will not be encouraged to produce better films, or do you think the effect would be definitely to give him some encouragement?

A. I think the result would be quite satisfactory. We had very long discussions in the cinema circles and what we found was that the big exhibitors like Madans are loathe to show any Indian films however good they may be sometimes, and if they do show them, they make excellent bargains out of it, that is to say, to the disadvantage of the producer, simply because they have a large stock of foreign films in hand and they do not care to show our Indian films. I am afraid the Indian films will not have a better market unless there is a little more restriction, I do not say too heavy, but just an amount of restriction that may be considered to be fair, imposed on them.

Q. The actual suggestion made by you is that these films should be valued at a minimum rate of Rs. 2½ a foot, that is to say, exactly ten times as great as the present?

A. Yes.

Q. The present duty is 37½ rupees per 1,000 feet. Your proposal comes to Rs. 375 per 1,000 feet. Do you think that that will be sufficient to encourage the industry?

A. I think it would be fair.

Q. May I make a further suggestion? As I told you before, there are very great difficulties in estimating the real value of a particular film. Would it not be better to have a specific duty? Instead of 15 per cent. *ad valorem* on such and such valuation, say, we will have Rs. 350 a 1,000 feet?

A. No, because I know as a matter of fact that certain foreign films are imported at very cheap rates. There are some second run films or third run films and so on which almost come to us in a tattered condition.....

Q. Would you not like to keep those out? A higher rate of duty might keep those films out of India?

A. Yes, but I am afraid it would be unfair.

Q. We have also had evidence that these old and second hand films are bad from the medical point of view, that they are bad for the eyes of the people watching them. Would it not be an advantage to keep those out by a higher rate of duty?

A. Yes. But I know for a fact that some second run films for the matter of that are not shown any more in America because they have run them for 6 or 8 or 10 weeks according to their standard, but from the standard that prevails in India and from the standard which generally prevails in the Indian film market, these films, if you handle them, do not appear to be very bad or tattered and still they are very cheap here because they are practically no good to the exhibitor there.

Q. You want protection for the Indian industry and yet would you not like to keep such films out?

A. That is true, but not by putting an exorbitant rate of duty which would be quite disproportionate to the original cost of it.

**Q.** You are probably aware that I have had considerable experience of customs administration. It is easy to administer a specific rate of duty. The only question then is how many feet you have got. The moment you get into the question of different classes of films, whether this is a first run film or a second run film and so on, it becomes almost impossible for a customs officer to do the correct valuation, especially without tremendously harassing the importer?

**A.** I understand that raw films are valued according to the invoices.

**Q.** One raw film does not differ very much from another and we can fairly easily find what the normal price is. But the value, as you yourself admitted, of a positive film varies enormously. It is not a question of the mere intrinsic value of the substance, but what has been printed on to it, and if customs officers are to distinguish whether a film has been exhibited in America for one week or two weeks or whether it has had the first run or the second run or whether it is a new film of a second hand film, you would find immense difficulty. I put it to you that you want protection?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** A specific rate of duty will surely be better, and it could be justified to a certain extent by the fact that you would keep out trash and other films which are bad for the eye generally speaking?

**A.** I have put down Rs. 2½ and it might be reduced a little.

**Q.** I won't bind you to that particular figure, but I am putting before you the difficulty of an *ad valorem* duty.

**A.** I quite see that. What I meant to say was that in view of these things and in view of the difficulty that you might have in getting at the royalty, which is rather the biggest sum that is paid by these people, it might have been fixed at round about this figure.

**Q.** Your criticism of the existing censorship in answer to question No. 32 is mainly I think on the composition of the Board rather than their work?

**A.** No. I also criticise their work too.

**Q.** May I deal first, then, with the composition of the Board that you propose. You want a provincial Board to deal, I take it, with Indian produced films?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And the Central Board to act as an appellate Board for that work and also to examine all foreign films?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** That is your proposal?

**A.** I may at once tell you that so far as the authority of the Central Board to inspect foreign films is concerned, I have practically gone upon the opinion that has been expressed by the Cinema and Theatres Trade Association, because I am not personally concerned very much with foreign films. I am concerned pre-eminently with Indian films, and just out of deference to their view.....

**Q.** On that particular point you do not hold very strong views?

**A.** No.

**Q.** Shall we confine our discussion to the provincial board then?

**A.** And the appellate power of the Central Board.

**Q.** You want a Board of which one-third should be nominated by Government, one or two members outside the trade elected by the industry, and the rest should be elected by the Local Legislative Council. What is your idea of the total number of the Board thus constituted?

**A.** I am not quite sure about the number of the present Board.

**Q.** Six.

**A.** I think it may then be about 10 or 12.

**Q.** And you would like each film seen by at least two members of the Board?

**A.** One or two or three. Two or three would be better.

**Q.** Two?

**A.** Two I think would be better.

**Q.** The Board would be remunerated in some way?

**A.** Yes. I should think so.

**Q.** There will be a considerable amount of work and an increasing amount of work to be done if the cinema industry, as we hope, succeeds?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Do you think that the gentlemen nominated or elected to this Board would have sufficient time to decide among themselves who is going to examine a special film, to meet and to examine it and make their report? I mean by sufficient time that you cannot expect the trade to wait for a month or two months. I think the trade may reasonably hope the film to be examined in a week.

**A.** They do it sometimes at the eleventh hour.

**Q.** You will have a relatively small Board, it will be in a sense smaller than the present one because at present the censors do not necessarily see the film. It is usually seen by one officer. You propose two. Every sixth film would have to be seen and examined by particular members of the Board according to what you say?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Do you think that you can get enough people who could spare the time for that? Wherever your headquarters are, let us say Bombay, they will have to be available there year in and year out.

**A.** Yes. They must be men mostly from Bombay.

**Q.** And they would have to put aside some of their private avocations in any case in order not to delay unduly inspecting the films?

**A.** Yes. Well, in order to obviate that difficulty I may suggest that the supervisor or the secretary of course, I suppose there will be one or two supervisors and some secretary too even in the new regime that I advocate—they might be included in the panel now and again according to the discretion of the Board.

**Q.** In other words you will have some stipendiary censors on the Board?

**A.** Yes. But what I do want to prevent is that the producer should have to submit to the taste of one and the same man all round the year for all the wonderful pictures that they produce. That is the thing I want to avoid for the future.

**Q.** I put it to the producers yesterday whether they had any objection to what you object to now, and I gathered from them that they did not. They found a man who was experienced in seeing the pictures was able to deal with them quickly, and they told us that very often they agreed between themselves, the producer and the Inspector, to cut out a certain thing if there was any doubt about it. You do not agree with that?

**A.** I may tell you without committing a breach of confidence that there is a certain amount of unexpressed discontent with the work of the censors.

**Q.** On the part of the producers?

**A.** Yes, and the exhibitors.

**Q.** They appeared to be satisfied.

**A.** I will give you some examples of the work that is being conducted at present. There was one film that was produced from a reformer's point of view in order to show some of the vices and evils of the present religious order among Hindus. The supervisor saw it and I believe the Censorship Board also must have seen it, and they absolutely rejected it.

**Q.** Of course, the Board must have seen it if they rejected it.



A. Yes.

Q. Supposing we had a panel as you suggest, it would include no doubt members of the orthodox Hindu community as well as those who have an advanced turn of thought. How are you going to appoint a sub-committee of this panel to examine such a film as you have mentioned? The orthodox people would fairly claim to be represented and the less orthodox people also would claim to be represented.

A. If the Board is constituted on the new basis there will be, in my opinion, some reformist people on it.

Q. Then there would be complaints from the orthodox section. You think that the censors ought to take the risk of hurting the conservative opinion?

A. These films are not made with a view to hurt any community, but to eradicate social evils, and to show up certain weaknesses and vices in the existing religious system.

Q. The orthodox would not agree with that. I take it you are a reformer yourself?

A. Yes.

Q. Naturally you think that the censorship to that degree ought to be much more liberal than it is?

A. Yes. It should be really infused with much more liberal spirit. I am afraid the present Censorship Board is far too orthodox in the matter.

Q. May I take the film that you referred to? Let us assume the Board examines it. There is a serious difference of opinion between one member and another. What is to be done?

A. It will go before the whole Board.

Q. And the Board has to decide by a majority?

A. Naturally.

Q. Pure majority?

A. I think so.

Q. Even six against five?

A. If it is rejected then I should like to make the majority rather heavy.

Q. Then you think at present the Board is too severe?

A. Too orthodox. Not exactly too severe.

Q. Too frightened of hurting anybody's feelings?

A. Yes. And there is another matter I want to point out, namely, the very great difference they make between Indian and foreign films.

Q. I was coming to that. I was going to ask you what distinctions are made between Indian and foreign films.

A. I understand in some cases they cut out scenes of suicide and murder. They would not allow us to show blood on the screen, or kissing scenes and embracing scenes to the extent that they do in foreign films. On all these points I say complete equality should be observed and the Indian producer should be quite free to give the fullest latitude to their artistic sense and sense of propriety consistent with the pictures they are depicting, to include such scenes as they think fit. I do not say that they should err on the side of vulgarity. But take a love scene. A love scene progresses and it naturally reaches its climax in kissing and embracing.

Chairman: Are you aware that Mr. Ramadas Pantulu, the leader of the Swaraj Party, complained in the Council of State that in an Indian picture, a wooing scene was quite out of place.

A. I am afraid he does not represent our opinion. Anyhow what I mean to say is that as one writing stories, looking at things from this literary and artistic point of view, what I feel is that it would be quite wrong and thoroughly artificial to keep out kissing or embracing scenes.

Q. In Indian pictures?

A. Even in Indian pictures, I do not believe Indians desist from doing it.

Mr. Green: We have been given to understand that many Western films seriously offend Indian sentiment by the representation of wooing scenes, kissing scenes and such like. So one gentleman told us yesterday. He went so far as to say that he objected just as much in real life not only to kissing and embracing but to certain modes of dress, including those at present adopted by the ladies of my own community. Do you now tell me that kissing is quite a common place in Indian society?

A. I do not say it is a common place. Our people do not kiss in public, so a kissing scene in public would be quite out of place in an Indian picture; but when you show the lovers in solitude or by moonlight as we do depict those scenes in our scenarios, we would have to introduce kissing, etc.

Q. But wouldn't that be rather analogous to looking in to the private apartment of a man?

A. But all films show private apartments. They do show the private life of people.

Q. And Indians have to be prepared to be exposed on the screen?

• A. Why exposed?

Q. I mean exhibited on the screen.

A. In portraying in an artistic manner the very best points of their life and their habits.

Chairman: Do you think that you can attract respectable actresses from Indian families who will allow themselves to be kissed by actors who are strangers to them.

A. Well, I think that the particular girls and men who will go into this line need have no objection.

Q. It is not a question of "need have". Will they?

A. Well I think it will come gradually, but it is bound to happen.

Q. I don't think it will be in your time or mine.

A. In ten years' time.

Mr. Green: That is the only distinction?

A. Then they object to our showing blood in our films. In one Empire picture a needle was put into the heart and when it was drawn out there was a torrent of blood; and yet it has been repeatedly dinned into my ears that the Censor will never allow a scene in which there was blood.

Q. Have you ever tried? Of course there is a definite rule of censorship that too much blood must not be shown; and I may tell you that the Bombay Board has cut out excessive scenes of that nature even from Western films.

A. Of course blood marks are allowed to be shown, but never blood oozing out.

Col. Crawford: I understand you are a scenario writer or that you have been.

A. Yes, I have written stories primarily and scenarios in co-operation with the Director.

Q. You have not put forward scenarios of your own?

A. Well, I wouldn't say I have mastered the art of scenario writing, but I have written scenarios.

Q. What sort of a return does a scenario writer get? Do you think it adequate enough to induce you to write more?

A. Oh yes. If I spend the same labour on a fine literary story it will not bring me anything like the return I get from an ordinary scenario. The best scenario writer in Bombay gets Rs. 1,300 per scenario that he writes, which is of course not much compared to what they get in America but then our industry is in its infancy.

*Mr. Coatsman :* How many can you write in a year?

*A.* He has already written a hundred scenarios and more.

*Q.* In what course of time?

*A.* Well, during the last 8 years; but every year he can turn out 12 to 15 scenarios.

*Col. Crawford :* Then he gets Rs. 1,300 a month. Of course that would be greatly increased if it was a better class of film.

*A.* And if the films went into foreign countries then of course the terms would be far bigger.

*Q.* Now, I understood you to say in your earlier examination that there is very little hope for the Indian industry as it is to-day, to expand. I was wondering what is the reason for this unambitious attitude of Indian producers of to-day?

*A.* All that I can say is they have got into a groove and it is always difficult to get out of an old groove into a new one.

*Q.* Is it not the impression that they make an adequate profit in the production of the cheaper sort of film that they use to-day, and also that there is not the market in India for the more expensive kind of film, that they cannot get a return on the improved type of film whereas on the cheap type of film they do get a good return—is that a true statement?

*A.* Yes, I think that represents fairly well their mentality in the matter.

*Q.* Do you think there is in India alone an adequate market for a better class of film?

*A.* Yes, I think films can be produced which will attract not only the ignorant audiences that they attract at present, but they might at the same time attract the ignorant as well as the more cultured classes.

*Q.* The educated classes both Indian and European?

*A.* Well, I will not hazard any opinion about Europeans because I am not quite conversant with their mentality in the matter. But I have seen for the matter of that a good number of Europeans seeing "The Light of Asia" as well as "Sacrifice".

*Q.* I have no doubt that if you produce the better type of film they will go to see it. Now you have only got 350 theatres, and I am just wondering whether the number of cinemas which India at present can carry, does provide an adequate market for a good stamp of film.

*A.* It does, because the Indian film always gets better returns than the European film. When I did just a little bit of distribution business, and it does not require much experience for anyone to learn—for instance in a small station if I sent down an Indian film I got Rs. 40 per day, while for a European film I got Rs. 40 or so for 3 days. That makes all the difference.

*Q.* That is a point I would rather like to develop with you. You have done a certain amount of distributing. You hire a good stamp of film out. Would each of these 350 cinemas give you as much as Rs. 1,000? On an average?

*A.* Except in Bombay, Karachi, Ahmedabad, you could not get even Rs. 1,000. Generally they get that for a good Indian film in some of the bigger stations.

*Q.* Then again if you show it in Bombay, you cannot show it in more than 2 cinemas; you could not show it in the whole 18.

*A.* Different cinemas cater for different audiences. All the Cinemas would not show Indian films.

*Q.* I do not mean Indian films but this particular film—I am trying to find out what the market for it is in India.

*A.* In the first instance it might run for 2 or 3 weeks and then, if it is a good film and makes a deep impression on the minds of people, it might have another run again after six months or so.

*Q.* But you could not show it in the whole 18?

A. No.

Q. Therefore the number of cinemas at which you can show this film is again restricted to a little below the 350. Therefore the return you can get on a well produced film would probably at the most never be more than 2 lakhs.

A. Well 2 lakhs would be a good return because they do not spend more than Rs. 15,000 or Rs. 20,000 on a film.

Q. On a cheap film; but if you try and produce a good type of film?

A. Such films can only be produced on one condition, that they get a foreign market. That is why I say the Indian producer, or any producer, for the matter of that, will not be so ambitious as to produce such an expensive film unless he was sure of getting a foreign market.

Q. One of the difficulties of encouraging the industry is that the Indian market is limited, you agree with me?

A. Yes.

Q. We have got to get over it somehow?

A. Yes.

Q. And you attribute the unambitious attitude of the producers to the fact that they are satisfied with the return they get on the cheap film, and that they themselves do not want to do anything more?

A. I won't say they do not want to do anything more. There have been attempts to turn out something better and there is the example of "The Light of Asia" film. I understand one studio has ordered some arc lights. Now arc lights are an absolute necessity because you cannot get good effects of interiors without arc lights and when you depend entirely on sunshine, which is sometimes raw or hard, and so on, the results are not satisfactory.

Q. Anyhow you are inclined to think the Indian producer to-day has got into a groove. Now what is the practical method you would suggest? I see you have a practical method. You suggest the bringing out of a foreign company of technical experts who in collaboration with an Indian company should produce films. Now, do you think it would be sound for us to make a definite recommendation that the Government should give facilities to foreign companies to exhibit in India under certain conditions? The conditions might be that they will take so much Indian capital, so many Indian apprentices, so much Indian labour staff, and that they should be allowed to work for a definite period of time. Do you think a scheme of that sort would encourage the Indian producers to copy them, would it lead the way for the Indian producers?

A. What I feel is that if the present day Indian producer does not interest himself in the proposition, I believe a new combine will be started to avail themselves of such an opportunity.

Q. Our object is not necessarily to get foreign companies here. Our object is to give a boost up to the Indian producing companies. If they are not able at the moment to undertake the higher development of the industry, would it be a practical method, as I say, to bring out or to encourage a foreign company to come here under certain specified conditions? Would that encourage the industry and the general public?

A. Yes, I think the higher class of financiers whose interest has already been awakened by the appointment of this Committee to look into the subject, they would really come forward with some good capital which these present producers can never command.

Chairman: That is hardly an answer to the question. The question was, would a foreign company be encouraged to come here and under certain terms do the work? You are now talking of Indian companies. Please answer the question.

A. What I say is, if such a proposal was made and if a foreign company was available to work in partnership with an Indian concern, if such a concern did not exist to-day, it will in the near future come into existence.

Col. Crawford: My point was rather, if we cannot get the Indian producing industry themselves to make a start, if we find no practical method of doing

it, as to whether such a lead would show to the Indian financier that it was a paying proposition, that it was not an insignificant industry and that he could very well take it up on his own, and if we limit it to a period of time, we can get rid of the foreign company after that.

A. I really approve of the suggestion with the safeguards that you have mentioned.

Q. You took into consideration, in the production of "The Light of Asia," the fact that the films all had to be sent to Germany for development. Now that, I understand, is probably due to the difficult climatic conditions here.

A. I am not quite conversant with the technical aspect, but I have heard from certain sources that the Indian climate is not quite suitable.

Q. You find ice in the tanks. Any amateur photographer knows that it is difficult to work at that temperature.

A. I think we could have fair-weather films in India—in the hills. But what we want at present is a good laboratory. We have no up-to-date laboratory to cope with this work and turn out good work.

Q. Now I understand you have very definite views on the nature of subjects and the moral standards to be maintained in the films. I would first ask you, do you consider the moral standard as shown in any western film is good, bad or indifferent—is it satisfactory in every way?

A. Well, in the first instance, the films are not to be judged from the moral but the artistic standard of providing good recreation provided they do not infringe moral standards. The films are not supposed to be made from the moral point of view, but they are primarily meant to give recreation and from that point of view, the films produced by the better class of foreign companies, in my opinion, are really nice and do provide good entertainment without in the slightest degree infringing the well-known moral standards of the world.

Q. But that is the better class of film. But do you think that the cheaper class of western film overemphasises vulgarity?

A. Well, of course, there is a certain percentage of the cheaper class of films which are on the borderline. I would not say they encourage immorality but they are not up to the higher standard and they might, with certain audiences, create a questionable impression.

Q. You think some of these films might be more strictly censored?

A. Well, as I don't see very many of these films, I would not give any opinion about it.

Q. Now then, as regards subjects, do you press for the necessity of scenario writers and the artistic side of the industry to have the right to treat nearly any subject it likes? I mean subject of course to the provision that it is not obscene or anything of that sort.

A. I press really for world subjects—subjects that might interest the world.

Q. For instance, take a subject like birth control. Do you think that is one which you feel you could claim might be treated on the film?

A. Well, I personally am in favour of birth control.

Q. I was not thinking of that, but as an artistic subject, you think it might be treated on the film?

A. Well, I would not press it for the moment because, as I said before, I don't think that the film is primarily concerned with the propaganda of ideas. They only come in through the side door. If a film is really designed with a view to propagate these ideas through and through, it won't be artistic and I would reject it.

Q. But I gather from your oral examination by the Chairman that you press for greater freedom of the artist in regard to the subjects that he might treat.

A. So far as they come into the region of art and literature.

Q. Well, in literature to-day you cover all sorts of subjects.

A. I know. But birth control, so far as Indian society is concerned, is not so current.

Q. I don't want to fix on a particular subject.

A. Well, take the subject of widow remarriage. I would certainly propose a film advocating widow remarriage. The law allows it and opinion is growing. And I would certainly depict in the most harrowing manner the numerous hardships and indignities to which widows are being subjected—the terrible trials they have to go through—and show their emancipation through marriage. It is really a human subject.

Q. You would propose the exploitation of the film for social propaganda?

A. That would really be a chapter of human sorrows and joys and miseries. Not because of its reforming value.

Q. Well now, when you come down to religious subjects, do you again want entire freedom? Do you think the position in the country is such that complete freedom to deal with religious subjects is possible?

A. No. If there is a subject that hurts the feelings of the Muhammadans or of the Hindus for that matter, and that intensifies religious antagonism, then of course I would not encourage it or I would not put it in the film. But then the difficulty of the censor comes in here. For instance, I am depicting a historical subject. There was the well-known instance "Shah Jehan." Now we can't distort history of our films. We are taking a great subject with the object of raising the Moghul Emperor and his times in the estimation of the public but if some character has been bad in actual fact and we were to depict it correctly, I think the censor would be going beyond his limit in asking us to cut out those scenes. He should be concerned with the general purport of the whole story and if that is not such as to wound the feelings of Hindus or Muhammadans or any other community, I think he should not interfere with the characters of particular individuals.

Q. You press for greater freedom but at the same time you think there are definite limits to it?

A. I quite agree.

Q. Now, I would like to take one moment on the question of the Empire. You are one of those who advocate very strongly producing international pictures in India from the commercial point of view with a view to showing them abroad. Are you generally in favour of an exchange of pictures depicting life in the various parts of the Empire amongst themselves.

A. Well, what I feel is that no definite system of exchange is going to help us in this matter.

Q. I understand you on that point. You were very clear there. But there is no hope that you could fix it by arrangement if it was a question of import? From the point of view of education and empire, you don't think it is advisable?

A. Well, I am also a bit of a politician and I hold very strong views on different subjects. I am certainly not for encouraging any films which tackle the Empire idea or anything of that kind.

Q. You are against India being part of the Empire?

A. I don't say that.

Q. If that is your view, I can understand it.

A. Not exactly. I am really for the liberty of this country consistently as far as possible with the solidarity of the Empire. But what I say is, that speaking from the point of view of the cinema industry, we are not going to be helped in the exploitation of our films in the foreign market by any system of exchange in Empire films. And besides there might be business complications that might crop up afterwards and they might conceivably hurt the trade.

Q. I am really asking to know whether it would be any encouragement to the Indian industry?

A. If my picture is going to be really good, it will be taken up in Germany, Italy, or anywhere. And I think really there would be far greater hope of our pictures going in England and in the continent than in South Africa where I know there exists very strong prejudice against Indians, or in Canada where Indians are debarred from landing, or in Australia where Indians have not a free entry except for purposes of study and research.

Q. Well, I was just wondering if some such measure of reciprocal treatment between different parts of the Empire would not to some extent overcome any prejudice that may exist against Indians to-day. I have seen Indian films here which have amazed me. I did not know they existed, and I should think if some of them were forced on the Empire, it might lead to a better appreciation of them.

A. I think they would land these exhibitors in heavy losses because not many people would gather to see them.

Q. It would really be a financial loss.

A. And the same thing might happen again with the British films in India. Because a prominent exhibitor has told me he has sometimes suffered serious losses over these British films.

Q. You hold the view on this question of the import or export of films, that films must make their way on their own merit.

A. Yes.

Q. Well now, as regards your censorship board? I notice you are going in very much for an elected type of board. In view of the great educative and propaganda possibilities of the films, and it is one of the greatest powers in the world in that direction to-day, do you think Government control (and here I would ask you to remember that you will have your own government in the future) do you think Government assistance is necessary or not?

A. Well, I think ultimately, as you say, when the cinema industry develops or when there is swaraj or some system of that kind, then of course the trade will have its own censor board just as they have in America. But for the present, I think government naturally is going to have a finger in the pie and is going to have some control and so I have suggested a method which will reconcile government control and the trade.

Q. I don't want you to look at it in that way, but in the wider aspect. In view of the great power of the film, would you suggest that all the world over governments would be wise to have some control over it.

A. Well, only so long, I suppose, as a particular people have not developed their own sense of responsibility. I think the trade people themselves will realise their own responsibilities when this trade has been advanced.

Q. As a rule you have not been in favour of government control.

A. As I told you, there will be an automatic check placed on their activities by the good sense and good taste of the world market and their own sense of propriety.

Q. You are also a journalist?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think anything could be done in the way of improving films? There is a definite question: Can the press assist in any way?

A. Well, unfortunately, the position to-day is this, that cinemas and producing companies are some of our greatest advertisers and journalists cannot afford to indulge in absolutely free criticism of the different films if they are going to retain their advertisements. And I may add that the other papers, for instance 'The Times of India' in Bombay and other papers, do not receive advertisements from the Indian films, but then they are not interested in it and they don't go out of their way to discuss it.

The trade has a certain amount of control over what we say. We cannot indulge in free criticism.

Chairman: Then it is not as independent as it professes to be.

*Mr. Neogy:* I want to understand your position with regard to the co-operation which you suggest between a foreign concern and an Indian for the purpose of improving the quality of film production in India. I think the idea which Col. Crawford put forward was that a company could be formed in which the Indians would have their opportunity of contributing their capital and then take up the work here in India. Does your idea materially differ from that? Or do you contemplate two independent units, one coming from abroad, the other situated in India, co-operating with certain definite objects and for a certain definite period.

*A.* I understood Col. Crawford to suggest co-operation between two independent units.

*Col. Crawford:* If I might make myself clear. What I said was that so far as I could gather from you, we cannot look to the present Indian producers to go on to the higher scale of production and I asked you whether you were of opinion that if we imported experts or if government gave facilities for a foreign company to come down here with definite conditions laid down as regards its being Indian and with definite conditions laid down as to vested interests, do you consider that might be a practical method of making a start?

*A.* Well, if you introduce a foreign company to come down, I would certainly welcome it now.

*Mr. Neogy:* Of course, you have not committed yourself to any details of any scheme?

*A.* No. But there are two ways, as it now stands, by which this can be managed. The best thing would be that, when a foreign company of this character was coming down to India, some Indian company or Indian producer should work on terms of equality with them as partners in the concern. But if no Indian producer was forthcoming, then I would rather wish that a company came down, put up their studios in India and engaged local talent, scenario writers and producers and other people to work with them in producing some high class picture and that would give us a sufficient example which would open the eyes of the local people to get better technical assistance and produce a better class of pictures.

*Q.* How long do you think we should wait to see if Indian enterprise is forthcoming before arranging to bring down a foreign concern?

*A.* Well, I think this committee, for instance, might recommend to Government that they might give facilities to some foreign companies to work either in certain circumstances or in co-operation or partnership with a local concern. And supposing Government agreed to that suggestion and induced some foreign company to come down on these conditions and if within six months or so of the publication of the committee's report no Indian concern came up and offered to work in partnership with that concern, then I think that company might be invited to start in on its own with the limitations that Col. Crawford mentioned.

*Chairman:* You would make it obligatory on them to employ Indian scenario writers, Indian actors and so on. Not without such a condition?

*A.* That is so.

*Mr. Neogy:* And also admitting Indians as partners.

*A.* Yes, that will be the first thing. The local unit should work in partnership with them.

*Q.* Supposing they failed and your foreign company were to come out, would you not insist on a proportion of the capital of that particular concern being offered for subscription to the Indian market here?

*A.* Yes, I would add that too as one of the conditions. I am not quite sure the local people will subscribe.

*Q.* But you are not just now in a position to state all the details offhand of the conditions that you are going to make?

*A.* No.



*Chairman* : You think that any facilities that the Government propose to give to the development of the indigenous industry should not be given without some safeguards?

A. Yes, that is my view.

*Mr. Neogy* : Are you aware of the exact nature of the financial organisation that was behind the concern that produced "The Light of Asia"? Was there any foreign capital in it?

A. Well, so far as I know, there was no foreign capital invested actually in producing it in India, but the foreign camera men and director came out here. I think they came out with their own cameras and their own negatives. And they bore all the expenses on their own and realised it in Germany. It was a good job.

Q. As far as you are aware of the conditions of that arrangement which was responsible for the production of this successful picture, you consider those conditions to be satisfactory?

A. Well, I have not gone into the details. I believe (though I am subject to correction) that there were faults on both sides.

Q. I want to know roughly the sort of association which the Indian companies would be satisfied with?

A. I recommend this combination of foreign expert talent with local genius but I would not go any further to discuss this matter because I am not conversant with all the materials.

Q. The reason why I put that question was because we might get more details of that scheme and see what sort of association would best succeed.

*Chairman* : Please don't go into details and names.

*Colonel Crauford* : With a view to speeding up Indian enterprise (though I am entirely in favour of local companies myself) I want to know if you think it is necessary to start something of that sort reasonably early?

A. Well, I would wait for about a year after the publication of the committee's report, because I think there is already a move in certain quarters in favour of the discussions that have been developed by this committee.

Q. Do you think you can get Indians to do it?

A. Well, I have a very great hope of something being done within a year after the publication of this committee's report.

*Mr. Neogy* : On the question of the organisation of the censorship board, you put forward a suggestion that some members should be elected by the legislatures, in the case of provincial boards by the provincial legislatures, and in the case of the central board by the Indian legislature. What type of men would you expect to be elected by the legislatures?

A. Well, of course, they should not be men of the trade. That is to say, they should neither be concerned with scenario writing or producing or exhibiting. There is a growing number of cultured men and women and I would certainly like to have a lady also included in it, who might be able to judge of the relative merits and demerits of different films in a severely discriminating manner. Of course they will have to be mostly from Bombay.

Q. Supposing other means were found to have that sort of people represented on the board, would you be satisfied, or would you insist on election by the legislature?

A. I would insist on it because I don't think we should depend upon nomination. I object to nomination.

Q. Do you think that the chairmanship of the Commissioner of Police is a factor that accounts for the unpopularity of the board?

A. No, I don't think so.

Q. Has the board got a police odour about it?

A. No, I don't think so. As a matter of fact it might be due to certain personalities, but I understand that the Police Commissioner has never stood in the way of the liberalisation of the film censorship.

**Col. Crawford :** Might I add a question there? You suggest the central legislature electing people. Whom are they going to elect—their own representatives in the house or from outside?

**A.** I have already answered that question.

**Mr. Neogy :** Don't you feel it would be rather difficult to assemble such a central board as you have in mind? If you are going to have this central board doing the censorship of foreign films exclusively, then would it not entail a very large expenditure of money to get people to assemble at a particular point from different parts of the country, and wouldn't such a body have to be a standing body which would have to meet from day to day?

**A.** No, I think as far as my suggestions are concerned, an all-India censorship board would be only an appellate body, because I have said beforehand that so far as foreign films are concerned I have simply followed the suggestion of the exhibitors and so I have drawn particular attention to it.

**Q.** You want the central board to assemble only when there may be a sufficient number of appeals which they might have to dispose of?

**A.** Yes. In cases where the film has been rejected, it does not matter if it remained unexhibited for a week or so until a suitable opportunity was found for a meeting.

**Q.** You are aware that, under the existing law, there is provision for an appeal to the Local Government against the decision of the censorship board? Has that provision been availed of much to your knowledge?

**A.** I don't know much about it.

**Q.** In any case even if that provision were there, would you be prepared not to support it?

**A.** As I said, the Cinema Act must be overhauled and means must be found for instituting this all-India board.

**Q.** You maintain that different standards are applied in judging foreign and Indian made films by the Censorship Board in regard to certain kinds of scenes?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Has it ever struck you that in so far as those scenes are concerned the Indian standard has been, to a certain extent, tinged by the foreign pictures, that is to say, there is a little amount of over-doing in regard to those matters simply because of the taste which the producer finds to have been created, thanks to the foreign pictures holding the field?

**A.** I think things are being under-done at the present time with the result that love scenes appear to be thoroughly artificial and lifeless in comparison to the foreign pictures. I have my own instance of "The Nurse" which was produced a short time ago in which a kissing scene was deliberately cut out by the censor. What I maintain is that that kind of things came as a natural climax to the previous scenes, and if it was freely allowed in foreign pictures. I do not see any reason why it should be cut out from our picture. Of course, I do admit that it should not be over-done, just to tickle the fancy of the cinema-goers. But where it comes as a natural climax to a series of scenes which have appeared before, I do not see any reason why it should be cut out. It is my deliberate opinion that many of our love scenes are absolutely lifeless because the censor or the Censorship Board, whoever controls the situation, have set down as a limitation that it should not culminate in a kissing or an embracing scene such as we always see in a foreign picture.

**Chairman :** Is that opinion shared by the scenario writers of the Indian produced films?

**A.** There are not many scenario writers of standing, and I do not know. I have given you my own views.

**Mr. Neogy :** I suppose you have seen the film "At the Clang of Fetters."

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Have you had to complain about the way in which the censorship was done with regard to this particular picture?

A. You mean to say, is there any kissing scene which has been cut out? I have seen the film, but my attention has not been particularly drawn.

Q. You are very anxious to see the atmosphere of the studios improved and to have a better class of actors and actresses?

A. Yes.

Q. You have read much about the subject I am sure. Are you aware of the sort of life which obtains in Hollywood in America?

A. I have been reading Sunday articles which appear in many London papers and other papers, and I think that all the rumours that we hear about night revels and all that are not to be taken at their face value. They ought to be taken with a pinch of salt. That is what I feel because an actress of no less eminence than Miss Norma Talmadge says that they have to lead a very laborious life. She says in effect "if we are going to do our work properly we have to be at the studio at 7 o'clock in the morning and I cannot afford to sleep later than 10 o'clock," and so all the gossip that the world hears about revels of the cinema people is not, I think, supported.

Chairman: Have you been there?

A. No.

Mr. Neogy: Your experience I take it is confined to Bombay?

A. Yes.

Q. Perhaps you are not aware that the stage in Bengal has attracted educated young men in recent years and that there is a decent number of graduates now who have been very successful as professional actors on the stage.

A. I have seen some dramas in Calcutta and I was really impressed with the high level of stage work that the actors and actresses showed.

Q. And the actresses in Calcutta are not drawn from any respectable classes?

A. No. I know that.

Q. And you consider them successful all the same?

A. So far as the pictures are concerned, I do not think that any such girl has yet made her mark on the films as Madans have not been able to draw any of them to their studio.

Q. It may be that sufficient efforts have not been made to find them out?

A. But so far as Bombay is concerned it is not only my opinion but it is shared by many directors, that we won't be able to produce high class pictures showing higher levels of emotion and feeling unless we have more cultured people and ladies and gentlemen of a very much higher class. And I am convinced that they will not enter the studios as they are conducted at the present moment.

Q. Do you think that actors and actresses in America really belong to any cultured class, or have had any very high education, most of them?

A. They may not be cultured or have not had higher education, but I understand that there is a certain kind of trade rule . . .

Q. Is it necessary for the purpose of being successful on the film for an actor to have very great education in a university for the matter of that?

A. No. It is not necessary.

Q. It is a question more of native talent for that particular kind of work and not so much of instruction in school or college?

A. I quite agree.

Mr. Coatsman: The witness has had a very severe cross-examination and most of my questions have been asked already by others. I will therefore just confine myself to one or two. We have heard a lot here about the reluctance of Indian capital to flow into the cinema producing industry. Various reasons have been alleged for that reluctance. What in your opinion is the chief reason, the outstanding reason?

A. They think that the cinema is something unclean; that is merely because the artists are drawn from an undesirable class, I mean to say, more or less.

Q. I can quite understand that objection in the case of certain orthodox people. Would that stand in the way of go-ahead business people like the Parsee community here? If they saw a good investment in this with a good return, surely that moral objection would not stand in the way?

A. It should not stand in their way, but, as I have said, there is this initial prejudice against it and then the studios falling down and coming up in a sort of quixotic manner does lend to the question a certain amount of mystery. Somehow people with bigger capital and with a higher class of brains and education have not investigated the possibilities of this industry very well up to this moment. That is what I really feel. If they had done it, they might have plunged into it before.

Q. A moment ago you talked about the continuous rise and fall of studios?

A. Yes. That is what has happened in fact.

Q. That means that the reason why Indian capital is shy is because of a sense of insecurity?

A. Yes. But I might explain that those studios have not been closed down because they have made a loss. Supposing I have two lakhs capital, I spend that Rs. 2 lakhs on producing some pictures. But the pictures bring their return after a lapse of 2 or 3 years. They take that much time going round the whole of India. By that time my capital is exhausted and I am not able to get banks and other people to finance me. So the studio is closed down for want of sufficient capital.

Mr. Neogy: In fact, the studio proprietor has only his capital to rely on, which he himself has put in.

A. Some kind of limited companies have been started, but the whole thing is based on a small capital. •

Mr. Chatterman: The question I really wanted to ask you was this. You have a certain number of producing companies in Bombay, let us say. Most of them are small companies and their capital is not very extensive?

A. No. Some have a little more than others, but none of them can be said to have the extensive capital which is necessary.

Q. Do you think an amalgamation of two or more of these companies would make the amalgamating companies more stable and would result in greater public confidence in their future and therefore a more easy flow of capital into the business?

A. But I think these people are very averse to any kind of amalgamation.

Q. What I want to know first of all is, do you think that those results will follow from amalgamation?

A. There is no tendency to amalgamation.

Q. Do you think that it would be a good thing if they did amalgamate?

A. Even if you put one or two of them together, they won't command the standing in the financial world of Bombay that is necessary for drawing larger capital.

Q. You say one or two. Suppose we could get a combine of half a dozen or of the whole producers.

A. Half a dozen of the Bombay producers? In the business world it is really personality that counts, and I am afraid none of the present producers have the personality and the standing in the financial world that a man like Sir Purshotanandas Thakurdas or Narottam Morarji commands in the Bombay market.

Q. But if you have combined them into a big producing company supplying the demand for Indian films and making a reasonable return?

A. Even if you amalgamate them all as a financial concern, the different studios will remain unless you want to close down all the studios and keep only one studio . . .

**Q.** Then you can have a properly equipped studio. I mean amalgamation and not merely an association of producers. My point is this. This question of capital, production and so on at present involves a vicious circle. You have not got the capital and therefore you have not got the proper studios and so really first class films are not produced, and therefore you do not have a sufficient market. If you can get a number of producing companies to combine together into one solid firm, into one solid producing firm, it would then command enough public confidence to attract public subscriptions and you would then have a high class studio with all the latest appliances. Would you then get out of this vicious circle?

**A.** As I have said before, these producers have a particular outlook from which nobody can save them, and even though they may financially amalgamate themselves they won't develop the outlook that is necessary for taking new strides.

**Q.** This is the final question. Do you think such a development would be a good thing?

**A.** As a matter of fact it is too impracticable to be considered at all.

**Q.** Supposing it is practicable, would it be a good thing?

**A.** Even then it would be perfectly fruitless and it would not have any good results at all. In the first place, they have not got that imagination and that outlook that is necessary to take the new strides that you have mentioned. They have themselves said that they don't like to rely on outside technical experts and all that. They are opposed to these new innovations. Secondly, they do not command confidence in the mercantile world of Bombay such as, would draw large capital into this business.

### Written Statement of the Bombay Vigilance Association.

A brief statement of our views regarding the Cinema and its utility will, we believe, help the Committee to understand the view-point from which we have answered the questionnaire.

We hold that the Cinema is a very useful institution and can be made still more useful to the community.

- (a) In our opinion: the cinema is a medium of innocent amusement and healthy relaxation, and as such it is particularly useful in filling up the leisure hours of the working classes who, for want of such means of recreation, would spend their time in the grog shop and such other undesirable places;
- (b) it is a valuable medium of instruction, and it is so particularly in a country like India where the great majority of the people are as yet illiterate; and
- (c) it is pernicious in its effects on the moral tone of the community in general if it gives prominence, under the cloak of art, to the base and sordid aspects of human life and human nature.

### Questionnaire.

#### INTRODUCTORY.

1. We have no special knowledge of the cinematograph industry either in India or abroad.

It is, however, one of the objects of the Bombay Vigilance Association "to prevent the publication and sale of indecent and obscene literature, *inter alia* in the shape of pictures, books and papers, and objectionable advertisements, cinema films and dramatic performances." (See Appendix).

We have an *ad hoc* Cinema Sub-Committee, the function of which is to pay regular visits to the cinemas in the City and report to the Managing Committee.

2. (a) In Bombay, Indians (1) of the educated classes and (2) of the illiterate classes frequent cinemas in large numbers. We believe that the Bombay public is becoming increasingly fond of the cinema and this seems to be particularly true of the illiterate classes, for whom many cinema theatres appear to cater specially.

We believe that attendance is on the increase, for instance on Sundays, particularly at the earlier shows, it is difficult to obtain seats at some of the more popular houses. On other days the stalls are not well patronised, but the cheaper seats are usually filled up as soon as the doors are opened.

(b) In Bombay the composition of a cinema audience depends on the locality. In the Fort, the audience is composed chiefly of Europeans and Indians of the educated classes. At the 7.0 p.m. shows the European element is greater. On the Lamington Road and Sandhurst Road side, the cinemas are patronised chiefly by Indians of the lower middle classes. It is, of course, difficult to determine the percentage of the educated classes to the uneducated classes, but most of the persons usually present do not appear to be highly educated. In Bombay the proportion of the illiterate classes increases as we go northwards.

(c) There are always plenty of children to be found at the cinemas, mainly at the afternoon performances. They are usually accompanied by adults. Even at the night shows children can be noticed. Persons of impressionable age frequent cinemas in large numbers.

## PART I.

### *Film Industry in India.*

3. This is perhaps a difficult question to answer straight off, as different classes of Indians probably have varying tastes.

As regards imported films, it is not so much the name of the producer, or the title of the film which attracts the average cinema goer as the name of cinema 'stars'. Charlie Chaplin and Harold Lloyd are always sure 'draws'.

From the size of the audiences we can say that some films, which may be considered excellent from an educative and moral point of view, fail to attract many persons. This may be because the public have no means of knowing which film is really worth seeing.

Indians of the educated classes generally like imported films, and we believe they would also like Indian films, provided they are fairly well produced. Indians of the illiterate classes and those who cannot read English probably prefer Indian films, comic films are appreciated by all.

4. If exhibitors are not catering adequately for Indian audiences the reasons may be that there is not an adequate supply of really good Indian films. There may be other reasons, but we cannot say what they are.

6. Films of topical Indian news on the plan of the Pathe and other News Gazettes would be popular with Indian audiences, and, if properly edited, might prove much more popular as the events depicted on Western topical news films are in many cases unsuitable and unintelligible to an average Indian. We believe that Indian historical and mythological films would be more popular with the average Indian audience than many Western films shown in India. Films produced in India have certainly a big future before them, but the standard of acting, make-up, costumes, etc., requires to be considerably raised. People want to understand and follow with interest what they see on the screen, and from this point of view Indian made films on account of their local colour and familiar names and scenes make a strong appeal to Indian audiences.

7-12. We have no information on these points.

13. The Indian film industry is in its infancy, and in order to encourage it we should welcome any reduction of the tariff on all materials required

by it, if such reduction would have the result of lowering the cost of production of Indian made films.

14. An increased use of the cinema for educational purposes in schools and for adult education in agriculture, public health, etc., by Government and other agencies would be most welcome from the educational and medical points of view. From the experience which we have had of the use of the cinema for the local Baby Week shown in the City (limited as it is) we are led to believe that if such films can be made truly educative and instructive, a demand for them would most likely be created. In a country like India, where instruction can be imparted through books and pamphlets to a small minority of the population which is educated, there appears to us to be a very great scope for the use of the cinema for instruction in health, hygiene, sanitation and useful knowledge of all kinds. Cinema films for educational purposes should not be too dry and care should be taken to throw in a little bit of fun and amusement to make them appeal to children as well as to grown-up persons.

15. Conditions are favourable to the development of the Indian film producing industry on a large scale because—

- (a) education is fast spreading,
- (b) Indian audiences appear to like Indian made films,
- (c) efforts have already been made by Indian companies to produce films of real competitive value.

16. It is not reasonable to expect at this stage Indian film producers, actors or scenario writers to come up to the standard usually associated with Western films. We think, however, that there is sufficient talent, but it can be developed only if it gets proper training and competent advice.

We venture to place the following suggestions before the Committee for the encouragement of the Indian film Industry.

- (a) The grant of Government scholarships to Indians for study in foreign countries in advanced photography, scenario writing, film management and any other subject deserving of attention. The production of Indian films should become a national industry and just as Government grants scholarships for technical and industrial education, it should give scholarships to deserving persons who aspire to excel as film actors or directors.
- (b) Provision of expert advice and guidance. Government might, in the first instance, bring out one or more competent men to advise film producers in India regarding the technique of the art and make suggestions for suitable plots, setting, costumes and other cognate matters on which the local men may require expert guidance and help.

17. If State assistance and encouragement in some shape or other can be depended upon, and if the enterprises are sponsored by business men of repute there seems to be little cause to fear that sufficient capital will not be forthcoming in India for film production.

18. This is a big question and it is difficult to enter into details. But we may mention just a few of the many ways in which Government in India can give assistance to private enterprises:

- (a) Assistance by the Army authorities for the supply of troops, horses or equipment for scenes of military displays.
- (b) Permission for the exclusive use of certain public places for filming purposes.
- (c) Special facilities for filming of important events and ceremonial functions.
- (d) Railway concession rates for journeys made specifically to places of historical interest and others for film production.

19. We have no information on this point.

20. (a) Our proposals (in answer to questions 16 and 18) will involve some expenditure from public funds.

We think that what small expenditure would have to be incurred would be justifiable if—

(a) it would lead to the establishment of a new and healthy industry in this country;

(b) raise the tone of cinema productions, and

(c) contribute towards the entertainment and instruction of the public, particularly of the masses.

Indeed such expenditure would be as much justifiable as expenditure on education.

(b) We may suggest that the expenditure should be met partly from Government funds and partly from a small cess to be levied on films, imported or locally produced.

21. We have not gone into this question thoroughly, but we are generally not in favour of the proposal.

23. (b) We would support any proposal which would increase the use of the cinema for the purpose of innocent enjoyment and beneficial instruction. Cinema pictures making known the conditions, resources and habits of the people, and the activities of Governments, not only of the British Commonwealth of Nations, but also of the advanced nations of the world, cannot fail to be both interesting and instructive. The Cinema can be made a useful medium for interpreting and bringing closer together the different nations of the world.

## PART II.

### *Social Aspects and Control.*

24. (a) In our opinion films containing certain undesirable features such as the following would have an injurious effect upon the public, particularly on the youth of both sexes:

1. Exhibition of women insufficiently clothed or in the nude.
2. Exhibition of men and women in indecent postures which may suggest sexual desires.
3. Scenes of orgies and revelry which may convey false ideas and create wrong impressions of the sort of life led by certain classes of persons.
4. Exhibition of acts amounting to transgression of the law, and particularly of such acts committed by ingenious or scientific means.
5. Scenes of violence such as assaults, torture, etc., which may have the effect of familiarising the mind to scenes of brutality.

(b) Immoral and criminally suggestive films are not in general circulation. But films which contain scenes such as detailed above are not rare.

(c) "Sex" and "crime" films are harmful. Films which convey a false notion of other countries are also harmful.

They are harmful in their effects on public morals, and particularly on the morals of the youth of both sexes.

We do not come across whole films which are immoral in their tone or plot, but some films may contain particular features which can be looked upon as undesirable, as they may have the effect of creating impure thoughts and stirring unknown desires in the young men and women who go to see them.

(d) We should like to see a more stringent and a more enlightened censorship of cinema films, particularly of "sex" and "crime" films.

We are of opinion that both "sex" and "crime" films inevitably create the desire in young persons, imitative as they are by nature, to conduct similar experiments on their own in real life.



Constant familiarity with pictures showing men and women in close contact or suggesting sexual relations have a debasing influence on the spectators and particularly affect young men and women. Just as the liquor shop is the closest ally of the Brothel, so the Cinema may become an equally potent medium of incitement to illicit sexual intercourse, if, of course, pictures are allowed to be exhibited which have the harmful effect of awakening sexual desires, which are easily awakened in the atmosphere of a crowded city offering ample facilities for their appeasement.

(e) There is the evidence of actual experience that men have been led to commit thefts after visiting the cinema.

Films depicting acts of criminality cannot fail to have an injurious effect upon impressionable minds, scenes depicting clever escapes, disguises, outwitting detectives, assaulting policemen, breaking open safes, etc., may gradually lead to a weakening of the control exercised by the respect in which the law ought to be held by the people.

(f) We have no statistics of crimes which are the direct outcome of the cinema. But the general impression seems to be that crime is on the increase, and we are not sure that much of it cannot be attributed partly to the direct teaching of cinema pictures depicting crimes, and partly to the weakening of the respect in which the law should be held by the citizens of a State.

25. It is difficult to arrive at any generalisation regarding the social customs and outlook of people in the East. But if we exclude those who have received their education in Western countries and those who have assimilated Western ideas, we may assert, without unduly generalising, that there is a big gulf between the social ideas and moral standards of Eastern and Western peoples. We think that this difference in ideas and outlook should be one of the main points which a Censorship Board should take into consideration when sitting in judgment on films to be exhibited in India. What may not appear to be objectionable in the eyes of people in the West may be so considered by people in the East, and thus, films which may not be considered to have objectionable features in the West may be found quite unsuited, wholly or in part, for exhibition in India.

26. (a) Yes.

(b) We have not ourselves come across an instance of this, but we have been informed that the film "The Ten Commandments" which created somewhat of a sensation when it was exhibited in Bombay has not met with approval in other places, mainly due to some of its religious scenes.

27. A good many imported films exhibited in India have the effect of misrepresenting Western civilisation and lowering it in the eyes of the generality of the Indian people. To the average Indian, Americans or Frenchmen or Englishmen are all alike on the screen. He is unable to make any distinction between various European nationalities. He takes for granted that what he sees exhibited on the screen is a true picture of life in the West. Films in which there are pictures of European women insufficiently dressed and sometimes practically in the nude, men and women in improper attitudes, etc., cannot fail to produce in the minds of the masses of India, and even in the minds of some educated persons, a low opinion of Western life and culture.

It is also true that films representing Western life are generally unintelligible to an uneducated Indian and are largely misunderstood by him.

Our suggestion is that in the censorship of films this consideration should be kept prominently in view.

Another suggestion which we may make here is that some authorised official or non-official body should issue a weekly list of the films to be exhibited in each place and should draw special attention to certain films which may be particularly worth seeing from the educational or moral point of view. We think that the proper authority for this kind of work would be

either an official like the Director of Information or a representative non-official body like the Vigilance Association.

28. For the reasons stated in our answer to question 24, we think that "sex" and "crime" films have a bad effect on children and adolescents.

29. Yes, if the Censors Board is of opinion that a particular film is quite unsuitable for children.

We are aware that such a procedure would have the effect of unduly advertising a particular film. But this would no doubt be taken into consideration by the Board before they certify that a film is fit only for adults. In any case we do not favour an extensive or indiscriminate use of this method.

30. We are not in favour of prohibiting all children below a certain age from visiting cinemas, except for "children's performances." It would be really very difficult to determine the age below which children should not be allowed to visit cinemas. Moreover, it would be difficult to ascertain the age of Indian girls, particularly of those who are over twelve.

Besides there would be no need to exclude children, if the censorship of cinema films is placed in the hands of a Board in which social workers and educationists of both sexes would be adequately represented.

31. Yes.

The censorship should be itself effective.

32. We venture to think that the present system of censorship can be improved. The censoring of cinema films is a business for which experienced social workers and educationists are peculiarly well fitted, and we should like to see them adequately represented on the Censors Board. One or two women closely identified with social work in the City should also be included.

As we have already stated (*vide* our answer to question 1), one of the objects of the Bombay Vigilance Association is to prevent the exhibition of indecent advertisements, posters, cinema films, etc. Our Association has given very anxious thought to the question of the effect of the cinema on the public, and we submit that if our Association is given representation on the Censors Board, it would be able to give valuable assistance to the Board in its very important and potentially beneficial work. We plead here, as we have pleaded before Government, for a voice on the Censors Board.

The Board as at present constituted consists of nominated members. We should like to see its constitution changed and enlarged, and to find on it experienced educationists and social workers.

The Bombay Vigilance Association has on its Managing Committee the representatives of seventeen social organisations and societies working in the City (*vide* Appendix D). It should have at least two representatives on the Censors Board.

33. A strict censorship need not interfere unreasonably with the recreations of the people, involve any falling off in attendance at cinemas, or unduly interfere with the freedom required for artistic and inspirational development.

A strict censorship need not come in the way of innocent amusement. The majority of films exhibited have few objectionable features and these would not be interfered with.

A strict censorship might on the other hand restore the confidence of all right thinking men and women in the Cinema and might very possibly increase attendance.

34. We are in favour of the replacement of the present Provincial Boards by a single Central Board, if no insuperable administrative or financial difficulties stand in the way.

(a) Such a Central Board would bring about a uniformity of methods and standards of censorship in India, and

(b) Obviate the chances of a film which has been passed by one Provincial Board being objected to in another Province.

At present every Provincial Board is practically an All-India Board, as there is a natural reluctance on the part of one Provincial Board to interfere with the judgment passed on a film by another Provincial Board. Again there is a tendency for importers to put their films before the Board which is considered to be the least interfering.

Such a Central Board may perhaps cause inconvenience to the Trade. But if Bombay is made its head-quarters, it will not cause great inconvenience as we believe a large percentage of the imported films are landed in Bombay.

The suggested Central Board should have a more representative and stronger personnel than the different Provincial Boards. There should be on it representatives of all the major provinces, and representatives of important All-India Social Work Agencies.

35. (a) Please see our answer to question 32.

(b) There should be no Advisory Board. We do not agree to a one man censorship, however excellent may be the qualifications of the censor.

36. (a) The present system is not quite satisfactory. The Film Inspector, even though he may be a super-man, cannot see all the films foot by foot, for himself. Even if he can, the very familiarity with the subject would produce a not unnatural disposition in him to regard certain features as the necessary concomitants of a film.

(b) It would be certainly a great improvement if all films could be scrutinised by members of the Board. This should be possible if the personnel of the Board is changed and enlarged.

Gentlemen of suitable standing will be available for this work. The Bombay Vigilance Association is prepared, if so asked, to give the services of at least half a dozen workers who would give sufficient time to the examination of films. They would, we feel sure, regard it as a public service in the cause of the moral and social uplift of the community.

38. We are told that a few cases of this sort have occurred. But we have reason to believe that in practice one Provincial Board rarely interferes with the decisions of another.

Each Provincial Board should go through the pictures submitted to it for approval irrespective of the fact that they may have been passed by another Board.

39. We have no information on this point.

40. We are emphatically of opinion that posters, handbills and advertisement of cinema performances should be censored.

Many advertisements and posters seen by us were objectionable—in fact they were more suggestive than the films they advertised. Moreover they reach a wider public than the Cinema itself.

The work of censoring may be entrusted to the Censors Board, or to a non-official agency.

42. We do not think that the co-operation of the trade in the matter of censorship would be desirable.

43. (a) We have heard that some obscene films have been imported for private exhibition. If so, a stricter control over the import of films would appear to be necessary.

44. The Press should take an active part in the propaganda for maintaining a healthy tone for the cinema by—

(a) refusing to insert objectionable and sensational advertisement;

(b) by refusing to mention films which are reported to be unhealthy in tone;

(c) by drawing special attention to good films.

Public bodies can also help in this work.

45. (b) We are in favour of film producing agencies being registered and licensed and their studios periodically examined.

## Written Statement of Miss IDA M. DICKINSON.

1. No, I am a social worker and have no special knowledge of, or connection with the Cinema Industry.

(c) The proportion of children under fourteen is small.

6. (2) My experience is chiefly of the Cinemas in the centre and north of the town which are frequented largely by illiterate Indians. I think that undoubtedly Indian Mythological subjects are most popular with this type of audience. Second to these adventure, or humorous, Western films.

24. (a) Yes, I consider that the Indian films modelled on Western sex films, though produced in India and acted by Indians, are likely to have a demoralizing effect on the public. Scenes of lovemaking, kissing and attempted seduction occur in this type of film. When these are seen as part of an alien civilization they do not affect the imaginations of the spectators much. When they are depicted as occurring among their own people the impression made is far more powerful.

(d) I do not think that the censorship of such films is adequate. I have lately seen one of the type referred to above.

27. (a) I think that films representing Western life are largely misunderstood by the uneducated Indians who are likely to consider that they are true pictures of Western life. They therefore confirm them in their low opinion about the West. They gather that social vice and drunkenness are far more prominent features of Western life than they are.

29. I am not in favour of excluding adolescents and children from any performances except in the case of certain propaganda films such as those which show the ravages of Venereal diseases as the result of sexual irregularity. It would be impracticable to ascertain the ages of persons seeking admission, and if films were adequately censored there should be no need to exclude adolescents. On the other hand it might be desirable to have more films for young people than are at present shown in India.

31. (a) I think that censorship is the best available means of checking misuse of the film.

32. No. I think that the present system of Censorship in Bombay is not sufficiently representative. The Board should include members of social bodies such as the Womens' Council, The Servants of India Society and the Bombay Vigilance Association. Two women should be on it, one of whom should be an authority on the welfare of children and adolescents.

40. I consider that posters, handbills and advertisements in the press should be censored. They are sometimes objectionable when the films advertised are not so.

45. (b) Yes. Film producing agencies should be registered and licensed, and their studios inspected. My reason for believing that the latter is necessary is that reports have been given, though not substantiated, that the studios have been used for immoral purposes. It is a fact that among cinema actresses there are a large number of dancing girls and common prostitutes. Some of these have not abandoned their former profession. I should welcome their adoption of the profession of cinema actresses, if they abandoned prostitution. I believe that it is owing to the fact that they continue as prostitutes that the industry is looked down on, and that some measure of control and inspection is necessary.

NOTE.—Among the uneducated audiences on an ordinary day women are almost entirely absent. They are seen on holidays, in company with their male relations. A great deal of interest would be added to their lives if they were able to visit cinemas at other times. Would it be possible to reserve some rows of seats at the early afternoon performances (which are poorly attended) for women and children? I have heard that this is done in cinemas in Madras.

**Oral Evidence of Miss IDA M. DICKINSON and Mr. M. J. ANTIA**  
**(representing the Bombay Vigilance Association), on Saturday,**  
**the 12th November 1927.**

*Chairman:* Which of you would like to speak?

*Mr. Antia:* I shall answer.

*Q.* We have gone into your memorandum at length. Are you familiar with the rules of censorship as they are now being observed in Bombay? Have you seen those rules?

*A.* No.

*Q.* Nor have you seen the instructions which the Censorship Board have issued to the Inspector?

*A.* No.

*Q.* I see you have a sub-committee which deals with cinemas. Are they here, or any of them here?

*A.* Miss Dickinson is a member of that committee.

*Q.* I did not know that you would be unfamiliar with those rules. It is very unfortunate, because you say that you would like to see a more stringent and more enlightened censorship of cinema films, particularly of sex and crime films. Probably you will be surprised to hear that all the five points you have mentioned are kept in view in the rules and instructions at present. If you want, I shall ask the office to give you a copy of the rules and instructions. Have you ever at any time complained to the Censorship Board in Bombay about the inadequacy of the censorship?

*A.* Not on a report of this sub-committee which we have recently appointed. This sub-committee has not come across any objectionable films so far. It has not had much time for functioning.

*Q.* May I ask whether your association at any time drew the attention of the Censorship Board to any objectionable film?

*A.* I am informed that we did.

*Q.* When?

*A.* About six months or a year ago.

*Q.* Was it one film or several films?

*A.* A scene in one film called "What happened to Jones?" shown at the Wellington Cinema. I think Mr. Kanji Dwarkadas will be able to enlighten you more on that subject because he saw the film. I did not see it.

*Q.* Was there anything else which you noticed?

*A.* No.

*Q.* How many years has this association been working?

*A.* For four years.

*Q.* That was the solitary instance which you noticed all these years?

*A.* But all these years we have not paid attention to this question. We have concentrated more on the question of the prevention of "the social evil".

*Q.* We had the Commissioner of Police before us and he told us definitely about the criminally suggestive films that there has been no increase of crime in consequence of the cinema, but so far he thinks that there has been a diminution of crime since the cinema came into existence, not that this is due to the cinema though. But you seem to believe that the cinema is responsible for crime or new methods of crime?

*A.* Our association seems to think that familiarity with films showing how crimes can be committed does lead some people to imitate what they see on the screen.

*Q.* It is not based on any actual experience, but that is an impression?

A. I think there have been one or two cases in the Courts in which the accused confessed that they had seen it on the screen.

Q. Our attention was pointedly drawn to a heading in a Guzerati paper called the 'Jame-Jamshed' in which the heading referred to some such thing as "What he saw in the cinema he practised on his master." But in the report of the case itself there was absolutely nothing to suggest any connection with the cinema. I wish to know whether you were really led by any such headlines or whether you say that from your own experience.

A. Not from our own experience.

Q. You gather that from one or two references in the papers?

A. Yes. And there is a general impression, so many people seem to think like that.

Q. We are asked to find out what foundation there is for such things. Have any of you, ladies and gentlemen, come across such a case?

A. I think it would be very difficult to come across such a case.

Q. In the case of these western films which you refer to in question No. 27 what is it you suggest? Of course, there must be some exaggeration you admit in staging or in screening. You cannot have the actual life depicted either on the stage or on the screen. It would then cease to be a stage or a screen. But what is it that you would advocate?

A. We are not advocating anything, but in answer to this question we say that a good many of the imported films must have the effect of misrepresenting western civilisation and lowering it in the eyes of the people who see those films.

Q. In what respect?

A. I mean the tone of some of the films is such.

Q. You mean the moral tone?

A. Yes. We are led to believe that people there enjoy themselves in some reprehensible ways which is probably not correct. We do not get a correct view of western life in that way. For instance, the other day I saw a film called "Nero's Orchestra". I think it does really represent western life but not of the right sort. It shows a night club entertainment and I think it is not very suitable for an Indian audience.

Q. Will it be suitable to an English audience?

A. I should think so.

Q. There is nothing morally offensive there to civilised human beings?

A. If they are used to seeing that kind of thing, they would not object to it. But I think the generality of Indian people are not used to seeing women in such postures.

Q. I suppose you know that we have got different views of dress and so on. Indians do not like short skirts now-a-days?

A. Yes.

Q. It is such a difficult subject and we should like to have your assistance. It is so difficult to lay down any general proposition unless you stop, for instance, the dancing clubs. Indians do not like men and women dancing . .

A. A lot of Indians do dance now in Bombay.

Q. And in social clubs now they have introduced dancing items.

A. They belong to the educated classes who have assimilated western education.

Q. Those who are not accustomed to these things, do you think that they are really so stupid as to think that this is the normal life of the western people?

A. When they see those things so frequently they may probably get that impression.

Q. Have you come across any instance where the sort of people you have in mind had really got that impression?

A. I do not think we can say that, because we come into contact with people who are really very well educated.

Q. You have not actually come across any people who have received that impression?

A. I have got that impression after visiting a good many cinemas and watching the attitude of people in the cheaper seats. As soon as they saw scenes like that there used to be catcalls and exclamations and kisses were echoed back.

Q. I suppose even educated youths do that.

A. Not those people who occupy the stalls.

Q. It is only a restraint of manners. It comes of education.

A. Yes.

Q. It is so difficult a subject to deal with and I am trying to find out what is really weighing in your minds in this matter, because the complaint has very often been a very general complaint. Can you give us any instance—this instance you mentioned of some scene in “What happened to Jones?”

A. I have myself no experience of that film. I did not see it. Mr. Dwarkadas saw that film and he knows more about it.

Q. Can any of you here representing the association give us definitely any instance where such and such a film contained objectionable scenes from the point of view you are putting forward?

A. I can remember one which I saw in the Empire about a year or six months ago—“The Daughters of Venus”. You see a lot of women in that film and they were brought in chiefly to exhibit their nudeness, otherwise there seemed to be no particular point in introducing them.

Q. I suppose you have seen the Revue companies visiting this country?

A. Yes.

Q. Are they any more nude than those people appearing on that stage?

A. I think a little more nude. I have seen the Denishawn dancers, but the people who go to such dances really belong to the classes who have been to England and taken western education, and the harm they do is very limited.

Q. Although on the stage such things perhaps may appear, still they should not appear on the screen.

A. I do not think they should appear on the stage to any very great extent but then the drama audience is very limited, chiefly Europeans, Parsis and people belonging to the educated classes. If you go to such theatres you will never find the class of people that you see at the Wellington or the Empress Theatre in the city.

Q. Your experience is confined to the city of Bombay?

A. Yes.

Q. We have it stated authoritatively here that the class of people you have in mind go only to theatres in their own surroundings and that they live mostly on the northern side of the city where Indian films alone are shown.

A. I think you mean the films to which uneducated Indians go?

Q. No, this class of films you object to.

A. Whether they are shown exclusively in the Fort? No, very frequently one film is shown in the Fort and transferred to the North.

Q. Have you yourself ever been to the cinema shows in the North?

A. Not as far North as Parel but up to Lamington and Grant Road side, to theatres like the Empress and the Imperial.

Q. We were told that many cinemas which cater for Indian audiences exclusively show only Indian films in Bombay.

A. Only Indian films, no. That is the practice in only a few cinemas in most of them when they run short of Indian films they show western films.

Q. Can you tell us from your own experience and in view of the fact that the uneducated classes are likely to be affected by seeing these scenes, which theatres in the city have you in mind?

A. Well the Empire, the Imperial, the Wellington, the Royal Opera House perhaps, but surely the Empress and those round about Lamington Road and Sandhurst Road where you get audiences composed of illiterate as well as partially educated persons, I do not think they show only Indian films on that side.

Q. Very well now, what is it you advocate? Do you think that these uneducated classes draw a correct inference of the European standards of life by seeing what they do actually here?

A. I do not think they would get a correct idea but a very false and exaggerated idea.

Q. I do not mean on the screen but seeing them in life.

A. They get no chance of seeing it in life.

Q. Say for instance at Juhu, Europeans bathing there. Do you think people living in the neighbourhood get a correct idea of Western life by seeing such Western customs as they do see about them?

A. They represent a very small percentage compared to cinema audiences

Q. Take again domestic servants watching the dances in hotels and clubs; do you think they get a correct idea of Western life?

A. No, they only see the dancing.

Q. Do you think that Indians take away any more wrong impression from seeing Western life than they take from seeing such things on the screen.

A. But I may submit that what they see on the screen is what no one would see in real life.

Q. What is it you see on the screen which you object to?

A. I think that ordinary ball-room dancing would not create a very false impression on Indian minds, but such scenes as are mentioned here in answer to Question 24.

Q. I want to know whether such scenes are shown on the screen.

A. Oh yes, they are. I do not say there are films which can be censored wholly but certain scenes or features which we think objectionable.

Q. The difficulty is that these statements have been made not once or twice but several times but when we proceed to ask persons who make those statements to give instances either of portions or of the story itself they are unable to give us any particulars, not only now but for the last 5 or 6 years; so we should like to have your assistance.

A. If we had known a year ago that this Committee would ask such a question we would probably have kept a list of scenes to which we could take reasonable objection.

Q. Not that we quarrel with it but we should like to know, because the Censors would like to be informed what it is that the people object to. You have not complained to the Board of Censors. Of course you are aware of their existence?

A. Our cinema committee has been functioning only for 3 or 4 months. Before that we had a sub-committee of which I was a member but we did not come across anything so very objectionable as to report on.

Q. You never came across anything so objectionable as to make a report to the Censorship Board.

A. It is very difficult for a corporate body to take exception; one man may say it is all right and another that it is not and the whole thing has to be referred to the general committee and then to a sub-committee and so on.



**Q.** I think Miss Dickinson has suggested that these producing places should be licensed.

*Miss Dickinson:* That was the suggestion I made in my answer.

**Q.** Have you ever been to them.

**A.** I have not, but I have heard reports and I know certain people who are employed as cinema actresses and it was largely from that knowledge that I was of opinion that these places should be licensed.

**Q.** I do not know whether it will be welcomed. If you go and force inspection on studios like that will it be liked?

**A.** If nothing objectionable is carried on, I do not see why they should resent inspection.

**Q.** You cannot tell us yourself that anything objectionable goes on and unless we have definite evidence it is difficult to form an opinion.

**A.** I merely know from reports received. It is not possible to confirm them.

**Q.** I may tell you that we have gone into the question with one of the ladies who lives in the studio or rather who is working in the studio, whose word we have no reason to doubt, that the conditions are such that she can take no exception. Unless therefore your Association has reason to believe that the conditions are different, what she said must be assuring to you and that is why I mention it. We have investigated that matter so far as Bombay is concerned.

*Mr. Antia:* Our Association had no time to go into detail as regards this matter on account of the very little time we have been given.

**Q.** But you are working for public welfare. Any way we went into that matter and we examined the lady, a lady connected with this industry, in camera, which gave her a full opportunity, and you will be glad to hear (unless you have any evidence to the contrary) that conditions have much improved and there is nothing to complain about. It is with that object that you want to license these places.

*Miss Dickinson:* Then there can be no question. The public will be satisfied and also, I think, there will be more likelihood of respectable women becoming actresses, which of course would be another opening for the employment of women, a thing which we all desire.

**Q.** Probably it will drive away people if you license these places and lay them open to inspection and interference from the police. It may have the contrary effect to what you wish—don't you think so?

**A.** I should have thought it would be a security rather than act as a deterrent.

**Q.** Unless you are satisfied that the conditions are wrong you won't advise us to recommend registration or licensing.

*Mr. Antia:* We don't see any harm in it. We have lady inspectors of factories, though there are no particular cases to show that women in factories are not leading moral lives.

**Q.** It would still be a reflection. Already the profession is not regarded as a very respectable profession and you go and register it as if it was a brothel, don't you think that will still further lower it in the estimation of the public?

**A.** We cannot say whether it will have that effect or not.

**Q.** You are looking forward to the day when respectable men and women will take to the profession, and this process of registration—I am only putting forward a suggestion—might have the contrary effect to what you have in view. Have you anything to say from that point of view.

**A.** Or it may have the effect of making it safer for women of the respectable classes to take it up as a profession. In India, the theatre—the stage as well as the screen—is looked upon as a profession for women of low repute.

Why not raise it so that it could be made safe for women of respectable families?

*Q.* None of you have been inside the studios, so you have no personal knowledge.

*A.* We have heard a lot.

*Q.* But if you believe all you hear there will be no end of it. I am not going to trouble you about the economic or industrial aspect of the question. You are public social workers and I wish to have your opinion on matters that concern you. I have nothing more to ask.

*Mr. Coatsman:* I also will follow my Chairman's example and question you only on the social aspect of this question. Now I would like to know if you could tell me anything about the effects of the cinema on children. I suppose you do look after child welfare.

*A.* In a way, but we are not directly connected with it because there is a separate Children's Aid Society. But we can express some opinion on the question of the effect of the cinema on children.

*Q.* Have you given any special attention to the effect of the cinema on the morals of children and particularly the matter of juvenile crime.

*Miss Dickinson:* No.

*Q.* You don't attend the children's police court.

*A.* I do attend, but so far it has not transpired that any child has been affected by visiting the cinema.

*Q.* And have you any connection personally with any children's society?

*A.* I am a member of a committee of the Children's Aid Society and I do occasionally attend the meetings of the children's court.

*Q.* Well, at your meetings of the Committee of the Children's Aid Society, has this question ever come up?

*A.* No.

*Q.* Well, leaving children for the present, have you any reason to believe that the cinema has a deleterious effect on adult morals.

*Mr. Antia:* That is what we have said; if the films shown are of that description. Otherwise generally speaking the cinema is a useful medium of education and enlightenment.

*Q.* What I want to know is if in the course of your work as a vigilance society you have come across specific instances of men and women who have suffered moral downfall and degradation owing, in part or in whole, to the cinema? You cannot say you have?

*A.* It would be very difficult to say that a certain person became a criminal . . .

*Chairman:* He means moral degradation, not crime.

*A.* Or was led a downward path on account of the cinema. It may be one of the various social causes which have an effect on the mind.

*Mr. Coatsman:* When you said a short time ago that you had little warning of this Committee I sympathised with you because until quite recently I have kept cuttings of the police court reports not only in England but in other countries in which specific instances were given of men and women, or rather young men and young women, and children being led into crime or improper practices, and also cases of moral lapses and so on definitely due to the cinema; but unfortunately I did not keep them. But I do want to know whether you as a vigilance society kept a record.

*Mr. Antia:* No, we have not, because our work has been chiefly for the prevention of prostitution in this city and the cinema is really one and a minor and subsidiary business for us and we have not so far given much attention to it. But I should think it very likely that the cinema is one of many causes which may lead people to immorality. When people see things on the stage which they have never seen in their lives or they expected to see anywhere, they are probably led to imitate that sort of thing.

**Q.** In future would it be possible for your Association to take special note of such cases?

**A.** I think so; and if we come across any cases within the next 8 months or so we will send it on to the Committee.

**Q.** You visit the cinema regularly yourself?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** How long have you been a regular visitor?

**A.** For 10 or 12 years. I have seen films in England as well as in Bombay and Calcutta.

**Q.** In your own experience have you seen any film on the screen in this country which really shocked you or disgusted you?

**A.** Not me personally because I have seen worse things myself, but I should have thought that it would have an effect . . .

**Q.** On people of less hardened moral fibre shall we say?

**A.** I should say once you begin to go to the cinema regularly you become blasé.

**Q.** Your moral sense gets blunted.

**A.** That is what we said about the inspector who probably too gets used to seeing these sort of things and does not think there is anything wrong about them.

**Mr. Neogy:** A statement was made before us that there may be instances in which the starting of a cinema in a particular locality has led to the closing down of liquor shops in that locality. Are you in a position to confirm this statement?

**A.** We cannot say anything. We have not heard of it in Bombay.

**Q.** It is in a statement we have before us here.

**Col. Crawford:** It simply says it might.

**A.** That is the observation of the International Labour Office and I am in agreement with what they say about the use of the cinema. We regard it as a valuable medium.

**Mr. Neogy:** From your experience are you in a position to say the class of films exhibited here really tend to lower the moral standard of people, generally speaking?

**A.** It is a very difficult question, when you say "generally speaking." In particular cases we may say that they lower the moral standard of people.

**Q.** On the whole, has the cinema as it is being run at the present moment in Bombay, a harmful effect on the morals of people?

**A.** Well, if you look at it in this way, that Indians are not habituated to seeing men and women in such postures as they see them on the screen or women with practically nothing on or they see certain scenes of revelry and orgies—that sort of thing probably has some harmful effect, generally. On the other hand, it may have a very uplifting and moral effect too. There are some films like that.

**Q.** General effect; as you yourself admitted, it would be very difficult to suggest a hard and fast rule for the purpose of excluding certain things. I take it therefore that your objection relates only to isolated scenes in some individual films.

**A.** Quite so, but that does a lot of harm because such films attract very large audiences, whereas the really good film attracts very small audiences. I have seen a film "Beau Geste," a most excellent film, but the Excelsior audience was composed of 20 or 30 persons only and the theatre could hold about a thousand. That is why we have suggested some method by which good films can be made known to the public.

**Q.** Taking this particular film, what method could have made it popular? Supposing it could be better known to the public do you think it would attract bigger crowds?

A. Well, some people who do not allow enough pocket money to their children might have said, "Go and see this film."

Q. I suppose the people who exhibit take good care to advertise their films?

A. Yes but these people always advertise their films in such high terms that nobody really believes what they say. Every film is supposed to be good but we don't know which is the film that is really good, so to say, for college students, school boys, etc.

Q. You would therefore prefer to have a particular class of films especially recommended for children?

A. Well, say deserving of honourable mention.

Q. By the Censors?

A. By anyone. We do not ask the Censors to do it, because the Censors would then be accused of showing partiality to particular films or interests.

Q. But what body do you suggest should take up this work?

A. The Director of Public Information if the officer is to be an official. Or you can entrust it to some non-official body. Our Association would be prepared and glad to take it up if asked.

Q. Do you think that films of an educative value suited only to children, would be a success from the financial point of view?

A. No, I should not think so. I have not seen any films which were suited only for children. For instance the film showing the Expedition to Mount Everest shown in Bombay by Captain—I forget his name,—that was an excellent film for all, children included.

Q. In one of your replies you say that a good many imported films have the effect of misrepresenting Western civilisation and lowering it in the eyes of the Indian people. Have you seen an article which has appeared in the "Times of India" this morning where certain observations are made about the bad effect of American films on the prestige of the white people? What do you say about that? How are you as a Welfare Association interested in this particular question.

A. If you ask us a particular question, has such and such a film a certain effect, we say it has this effect.

Q. But would you allow this consideration to influence the standard which is adopted by the Board of Censors for their work.

A. In a way yes and in a way no. There are some films shown here which would probably not be acceptable to audiences in America. For instance the so-called Wild West films refer to a kind of life in America which no longer exists. It is practically finished and yet you get that sort of film specially for countries like India or other countries. They give us quite a false notion of what America really is like. In this way I do not think we get any good idea of what America is or any other country is.

Q. Your interest is to allow the people to get a correct representation of things outside India? That is all you care for. You are not particularly anxious to safeguard the prestige of any particular class of people?

A. No.

Q. You are only concerned with the effect it produces upon Indian audiences generally?

A. Yes. They are wrongly construed. When they see such films they say to themselves: "If more civilised people than us can do it why should we do to the same". And so they try to copy them.

Q. But you would object to it simply because it would not be teaching the exact state of things?

A. Yes.

Q. That is the only reason why you say in the censorship of films this consideration should be kept "prominently" in view. Why do you insist on this "prominence"?

A. Well, as I said there are some films which are really meant only for India. That is our information, that some films produced in Western countries are not really meant for their own country but for foreign countries. They show a kind of life which is no longer in existence now.

*Chairman:* Do you believe that films are made for India specially.

A. That we don't know, but we have been told that such films would not have any effect in the country in which they originate.

Q. You have read general statements in the newspaper?

A. That is what we heard. We had a sub-committee appointed on the subject.

Q. Can you give us any instance where such a film was made only for India and not for the American screen?

A. I cannot, but we are told this about what are called Wild West films. I have no definite information.

*Mr. Neogy:* In reply to question 40 you refer to advertisements and posters and you say that many of them are more objectionable, more suggestive than the films themselves. We have had a statement made by some other witness, or rather I remember to have seen this statement made somewhere, that as a matter of fact some of the advertisements relate to certain scenes which have been excised altogether by the Board of Censors. Have you ever tried to ascertain whether this is so?

A. No.

Q. You have not compared the posters with the films which they advertise?

A. We did receive some information as regards the titles; the translation of the titles of the films into the vernacular had no reference to the film itself. I did not see the film myself but a film was recently shown at one cinema which was called "Sea Beast," which was translated into "Pure Love." They try to translate the title in such a way as to attract the illiterate classes.

*Col. Crawford:* I would like to ask how many members you had in your Association to start with?

A. I cannot say that. About 200.

Q. How many members are there in your association?

A. About 200.

Q. I want to keep mainly to the social side.

A. We are more or less a representative body. We don't care much about having a number of members.

Q. Taking the production side, in your answer to No. 20 you say: "We are proposing a scheme which will involve some expenditure from public funds." And you say: "Indeed such expenditure would be as much justified as expenditure on education."

A. Perhaps it has been put too strongly.

Q. Do you consider that the finances of the country are sufficiently adequate to provide for present educational requirements?

A. But would this involve a very great expenditure? How much would it cost?

Q. Whatever it costs at present will take away from education. The question is, do you consider that this particular form of visual education is of such great value that we should surrender some of our primary education for it?

A. Couldn't we get the money from a small cess on films? That is what we suggest.

Q. The point is that it should not take precedence over existing expenditure on education but that special taxation should be provided. Taxation comes out of the cinema-goer's pocket eventually.

A. It may come from the amusement tax.

Q. Yes, that comes out of the cinema-goer's pockets. That is what I want to know, whether you really consider that this visual form of education is more important, for instance, than primary education. If we have not the money for both, which are you going to give up? Or are you sufficiently strong in favour of the cinema to give it first place?

A. Generally speaking, our Association is in favour of making the cinema a medium of instruction, particularly in a country like India where people can't read, and it would also have a wider audience. But of course, in the long run primary education would be much more beneficial to the country.

Q. Well now, I take you to your answer 24. I think in your reply to Mr. Coatman you said that you yourself had suffered no ill effects from seeing western films. Might I suggest to you therefore that, as a rule, to the pure all things are pure and we are sometimes liable to think that things are having a bad effect on us when they are not. For instance, do you think a child gathers a wrong impression from seeing two people dancing? You speak of seeing men and women in close contact.

A. That does not mean dancing.

Q. My suggestion to you is that possibly some of these things start from seeing impurities in private life. For instance, the Indian in his private life is seeing his own people in close contact.

A. I am not speaking of the Parsi community but the Indians generally. Those who have not taken up western modes of life, they do not come into contact with their women folk.

Chairman: You mean to say the labourers in the fields do not come into contact with their women folk? Or the mill hands? They come more closely than the others, three families, four families.

Col. Crawford: We don't want to be unreasonable.

A. It is a very difficult matter.

Q. But on the whole your experience is a little bit that the producer over-emphasises the underside of life?

A. Oh yes.

Q. And what is your suggestion to remedy that?

A. A little stricter censorship.

Q. Later on, in regard to crime, you say there is evidence of actual experience that men have been led to commit theft after seeing a cinema film. You have none yourself?

A. No, except what we have read in the papers.

Q. You cannot help us by giving examples?

A. No.

Q. Now you say in answer to 27 that someone should issue a list of films to be exhibited in each place,—an official like the Director of Information. Is there anything to prevent the Vigilance Association from doing it now?

A. No, there is nothing to prevent it.

Q. Do you think it would be a good thing if you appointed members of your Association to do this?

A. We should be rather late. Because the film only runs for a week.

Q. I don't want this for the information of the committee, but with a view to raising the standard of films. If the censors got objections from you they would take notice of it.

A. It would have to be a private view.

Q. Why shouldn't you attend the public cinema?

A. We cannot possibly see all the films on Saturday and by the time it is published it will be Tuesday.

Q. But it is shown in other parts of India. Can't you think of some way in which your Association could help?

A. But it would certainly have greater weight if the suggestion comes from your committee.

Q. Oh well, we may make general recommendations but that is where the public can undoubtedly help themselves. Instead of just harping that these cinemas are bad, you might take definite notice.

A. They would take us for cantankerous folk.

Q. That would depend on the recommendations you make to the board. If you really find things that are sensible I am sure the censors' board would take notice. I only suggest it to you.

A. I think it would be better if there was the sanction of the Government or your committee behind it. If the Censors' Board would invite us to do it, it would be much better. Otherwise they would say, "these people are constantly coming to us with complaints and we don't want to be bothered with them."

Q. Are you aware that one of the particular duties of the board of censors is hearing any representation from members of the public? That is one of their statutory duties. You might take advantage of that by yourself taking a hand in raising the moral standard of the film industry.

A. Our idea was, if they gave us representation on the board it would work out better.

Q. Yes, but even then your representatives cannot see all the films.

A. But we have suggested that they can, if you made it a sufficiently large body.

Q. I would just like to turn for one moment to the question of the central board. You were in favour of a central board on the ground of uniformity and you suggest that it should have some representatives from the provincial boards of all the major provinces. Is that a practical proposition?

A. Well, it could be made practicable.

Q. What do you mean by stipendiary men? One whole-time man from each province?

A. Couldn't we find in India a sufficient number of men with a public spirit to come forward?

Q. But are they going to come and live in Bombay permanently?

A. Or in other places which are selected as the headquarters. Or they could change every two years.

Q. Do you think it is absolutely necessary? To-day don't the films passed by the censors go all over India without any objection?

A. Certainly they are doing much valuable work.

Q. And there is not much objection outside? Only 6 cases in the last few years in which any other board differed.

A. But it would certainly be a great improvement if the censors' board were made more representative of the public and the people who are actually doing social work.

Q. Yes, but must it necessarily be—is it absolutely essential that it should be representative of all the provinces?

A. Not necessarily, if other provinces do not become jealous. They might say: Why do you want to have it all your own way?

Q. In 43 (a) you speak of some obscene films which have been seen at private exhibitions. Have you any evidence of that or is it only rumour?

A. So many things come to our ears.

Q. But can't you pin them down?

A. We have nothing on the file. A member of our Association comes and says, such and such a thing was exhibited in Bandra. But all those who saw it are not willing to come forward and say that they did see it.

Q. But you have had members of your Association making that suggestion?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you report it to the police?

A. No, we didn't. Because we had nothing definite.

Q. Why didn't you ask the member to report it to the police?

A. There are so many things we can say, but we are unwilling to report unless we are quite sure of our ground.

*Mr. Green:* Might I put this question to Miss Dickinson as it comes out of her answer to 24 (a)? You point out that scenes of love-making and so on are not familiar to Indian audiences. When these are seen as parts of an alien civilisation they don't affect the imagination of the spectators much but if they are seen in an Indian setting they have a far more powerful effect. Now, I take it that if an Indian who sees a western film showing life in what appears to him to be an improper light, it doesn't hurt him much?

*Miss Dickinson:* Yes, that is what I meant.

Q. When these things are copied into indigenous films they are much more powerful?

A. I think they affect the imagination much more.

Q. I wonder if I might put this somewhat delicate question to you. Ladies have complained to me—I have been a member of the censors' board—that on occasions they see cinema shows and feel ashamed themselves at the representations made of white women on the screen and of the effect that it has on other members of the audience of other nationalities. Could you tell me whether there is anything in that complaint?

A. No, I think the shame is one's personal shame.

Q. You are not affected by the feelings of other members of the audience?

A. Oh no.

Q. I am so far in sympathy with these complainants that I have myself felt something akin to disgust at times. But what I am trying to get at is: do you think the censors' board ought to try and stop these things because of their effect on Indians?

A. No, I think because of their effect on everybody—not Indians at all. I should say they have a less bad effect on Indians than on that type of European.

Q. That is what I was trying to get at on that question. Now, I have already told you, I have been on the censors' board for some time myself and I was very relieved to hear what few complaints you had against us.

*Mr. Antia:* Not only few complaints, but we are not here to pick holes in the censors' board. They are doing very excellent and valuable work.

Q. One complaint you made about the film "What happened to Jones". Was that sent in by the Association or was it more or less a private complaint of Mr. Kanji Dwarkadas?

A. I do not know of this myself—but I am told that it was taken official cognisance of by the managing committee.

Q. I ask this because Mr. Jeejeebhoy who is a member of your association is also a film censor and he had no knowledge of this having been put up officially.

A. He may not have been present at the meeting.

Q. You think it was an official complaint. In that case, might I ask if you know what action was taken by the board of censors?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you agree that a very complete investigation was made?

A. Well, we have no reason to believe that it was not a complete investigation.

Q. This film was shown at a charity show at which His Excellency the Governor, his wife and his young daughter were present. They not only were very amused with it—it was a purely comic film—they congratulated



the gentleman who showed the film. It was then shown for at least one week in Bombay and it was shown in many other parts of India and in no part was there any complaint whatsoever that it was anything but a perfectly pure comic film. Nevertheless on receipt of your representation, the board took special care to find where each separate copy of that film was; they got the owners to recall them. Each copy was carefully re-examined by members of the board and nothing improper could be found. They even went to the length of getting a fresh copy from America to see if there was any variation. Nothing objectionable was found. And the board came to the conclusion, after very careful investigation, that it must have been a mistake of your representative and we communicated that view to your association.

A. It is a very difficult thing to say if you actually saw it or not. Only the other day I was not quite sure that I did not see exactly the same thing as Mr. Dwarkadas saw himself. It just flashed and was gone.

Q. It astounded the board because of the circumstances in which it was shown and the careful examination afterwards. They came to the conclusion that it was a mistake of eyesight. That is the only complaint you made. Might I put to you that if you have been specifically looking out for improprieties and found none, the work of the board has been generally speaking sound?

A. Yes, on the whole we have not much complaint to make. We have only to make complaint of certain scenes which probably would not be exhibited if the board had some ladies looking after these things.

Q. At present as you know the board consists of 6 members who are paid certainly not very considerable fees and the work of examination is primarily done by their paid officials. The board is called in if there is any doubt in the mind of the paid official. The board has just succeeded in making itself solvent and is now able to work without calling on Government to assist it. You wish the board to be extended so that more interests may be represented?

A. Yes.

Q. Is it your desire that members of the board should inspect the film rather than a paid official?

A. We don't think that is impossible.

Q. And you also desire to have a central board?

A. If that is considered by you to be practicable we should certainly welcome it.

Q. I think that was one of your recommendations.

A. Yes, you asked a particular question whether a central board would be better than so many provincial boards.

Q. At present it takes 3 hours a day year in year out to inspect the films licensed in Bombay alone. If you make a central board you may fairly say it will be at least doubled—say 6 hours a day. And if 2 members of the board at least have to inspect it will mean an increase to 12 hours. The only remedy therefore is to increase the number of members of the board. You don't want a very extensive panel, because you would have to have 2 members of the board working every day. Wouldn't it be difficult to get ladies and gentlemen of sufficient leisure besides the essential qualifications of education and so forth, knowledge of India, knowledge of the west, wouldn't it be difficult to get a sufficient number of these people?

A. But do you suggest that every member of the board should see each film?

Q. No, but you do wish two members to see each film.

A. If it is divided among them I think the work can be finished quicker.

Q. I am asking you. You yourself, I take it, are actively engaged in the teaching profession. You are a member of this very worthy association—the Vigilance Association. Could you spare the time yourself personally even once every week—for three hours? Year, in year out, without a holiday?

A. If you regard it as a social service, I think we would. And I think our Vigilance Association can give us such members. In Bombay I think sufficient public-spirited men would come forward and devote their spare time to this work because it is really valuable work.

Q. They would come forward without remuneration?

A. Well, a little remuneration always stimulates social service. As we see in the standing committee. No member is ever absent from meetings of the standing committee but he may be absent from the corporation several times. A small fee always makes people more ready to serve.

Q. Assuming that we have no difficulty in getting these public-spirited ladies and gentlemen to come forward, you will readily appreciate that when an exhibitor or owner of a film wants it to be examined he cannot be expected to wait more than a certain number of days. Do you think it will be possible to get a suitable number of censors to examine a film within a reasonable period—especially if there are two. You have to get the place, fix the day and the hour, and at present most of the inspection has to be done before the evening because the theatres are occupied after 5 or 6.

A. You suggest that at present there is rather a hurried inspection of films?

Q. No, at present there is a full-time officer and the other is a half-time officer.

A. Do they examine the picture foot by foot?

Q. Every inch. May I tell you what it works out to—they take just about the same time as the board of censors in England does—which is said to be a highly efficient board. Roughly 4,000 to 5,000 feet an hour.

A. Well, we should like to work it out. I cannot say at present whether it is possible or impossible.

Q. I should be interested if you would work it out. I am not putting it as a point of criticism but as a point of practical politics.

### **Written Statement of Mr. KANJI DWARKADAS, Secretary, Bombay Vigilance Association, dated the 9th November 1927.**

#### **INTRODUCTORY.**

1. I have no special knowledge of the Cinematograph industry either in India or abroad.

#### **GENERAL.**

2. Indians of the educated classes frequent the cinemas in very large numbers. The illiterate classes also visit cinemas in large numbers, but not yet in the same proportion as the educated classes. In my opinion, such attendance is on the increase and with proper encouragement and further facilities, the cinematograph could be made still more popular. I refer especially to the following areas:—

Fort.

Chowpatty.

Sandhurst Road

Lamington Road

Parel.

} Girgaum and Jacob Circle side.

(b) Audiences at Cinemas are very mixed, consisting of all classes, but to some extent the composition of an average cinema audience depends on the locality. The Fort cinemas attract mainly Indians and Europeans of the so-called higher classes, the upper and middle classes. Those in the heart of the city draw the upper and lower middle classes. Those nearer Parel and Sandhurst Road are patronised by lower middle and working classes.

(c) Quite a good number of children are found at cinemas mainly at the before-dinner shows. One also sees a very large number of adolescent of impressionable age.

## PART I.

### *Film Industry in India.*

4. I have no first-hand knowledge on this point, but I believe that the exhibitors are not catering adequately for Indian audiences. One of the main reasons seems to be financial difficulties.

5. Indian produced films are not readily available in very big numbers to exhibitors yet.

(a) For a beginning they are not bad, and could easily be improved.

(b) They are certainly very popular, and thus lead one to the conclusion that more films produced in India depicting Indian life, have a very big future.

(c) The latest instance is "Sacrifice." I can also speak from first-hand personal experience of the three Indian-films produced by the Bombay National Week, of which I was up till March 1927, one of the Secretaries. "Save the Baby," a film about the evil effect of child-marriage and "The Curse of Ignorance." The last is an Indian adaptation of M. Brieux's "Damaged Goods," and I myself took a part (very insignificant) in the acting. The scenario was written by Mr. P. J. Marzban. It was discussed in the minutest details by a sub-committee of Social Workers and the film was taken under the very able supervision and direction of Lādy Cowasji Jehangir (Mrs.). I was present when the films were being taken.

I think that as time goes, it would be more profitable to show an Indian film, but the Western film would also continue to be popular.

6. (a) I am very strongly of opinion that films of Indian life, topical Indian views, and scenes (with Indian actors) depicting stories from the national literature, history and mythology would certainly be more popular with Indian audiences than the prevalent Western films.

(b) Stories from the National literature, history, and mythology to both the educated and the illiterate population.

7. I have no information.

8. (a) I am not satisfied with the present condition of the industry in this country in its several branches of production, distribution and exhibition.

(b) The main difficulty seems to be financial. Then the actors have not had sufficient training. The standard of acting, make up, costumes, action, and expression leave much room for improvement.

The State with the co-operation of the general public could help by way of capital for financing the production of films and by giving scholarships for training cinema actors and actresses, by sending them abroad, if necessary; also by giving special facilities for the use, without rent, of historical places; by concessions on the railways for cinema-parties. Also making duty-free imported articles necessary for film-production, e.g., cinema-cameras, raw-films, etc.

9-11. I have no information on these points.

12. Not being in the trade, I cannot say to what extent the Amusement Tax is a handicap to the exhibitors, but I think the Amusement Tax ought to go. Apart from its effect on the cinema industry it is taxing the innocent pleasures of the public at large. I also feel that the Indian film industry is in its infancy, and the tax would certainly be a handicap. I am for its abolition so far as it affects the drama and the cinema.

13. I know nothing about the effect of the present Customs Tariff on imported films on the exhibitors. I have already suggested (see answer to question 8) making duty-free articles necessary for film production.

14. I am very very strongly in favour of an increased use of the cinema for educational purposes in schools and for adult education in Agriculture, Public Health, etc., by Government, Municipalities, or preferably, with financial help from Government or Municipal funds, by non-official social organisations (like the Social Service League, the Infant Welfare Society or the Baby-Week Organisation). These would be most useful and interesting.

15. Conditions in India are most favourable to development of an Indian film-producing industry on a very large scale, because of the spread of education, and appreciation by Indian audiences of Indian films; also because of the excellent scenes, the requisite variety of colors and light, available in all parts of India.

16. It would be unreasonable to expect just yet Indian film producers, actors or scenario writers to come up to the Western standard. But the progress so far made and in such a short time is very encouraging. There is sufficient talent, but it needs proper training, competent advice and encouragement.

17. Sufficient capital would be forthcoming for film-production if assured of State-aid.

18. Yes, suitable Government action would be an effective incentive and encouragement to private enterprise for film-productions. For details, see answers to questions above.

• 19. I have no information.

20. My suggestions would involve expenditure from Government funds, which I consider justifiable; the industry would give employment to thousands of educated and illiterate Indians and solve to some extent the problem of unemployment. It would raise, if properly handled, the moral and artistic tastes of the people; it would help people to lead more healthy and sanitary lives, and thus would reduce the extent of disease, and there would be consequent savings of expenditure; it would take people away from the grog-shop and thus be an instrument for maintaining and strengthening the vitality of the nation.

(b) I suggest an *ad valorem* 30 per cent. import duty on all race-horses imported from Australia and Europe.

21. Apart from the fact that it would not be practical to give effect to this proposal, I am not in favour of the proposal when the Government is neither responsible nor responsive to popular public opinion. Such an agency would be suspected, and not without grounds,—of doing propaganda against Indian interests.

#### *Films of British Commonwealth.*

22. I am opposed to India being made to participate in the policy outlined in the resolution of the Imperial Conference to give some measure of encouragement to British Empire films, both on principle and because of difficulty of its practical adaptation. For, such participation would not assist in the development of its own film-industry. Without agreeing to Imperial Preference and in spite of not agreeing to it, means should and could be found to make India better known and understood throughout the Empire and the world.

(c) I do not think British-made films have any better or worse standard than the American. At any rate, they have the reputation of being more dull.

• 23. The cinema pictures could and should be used to a very great extent in making known the conditions, resources and habits of the people and the activities of the various Governments, not only of the Government of the British Commonwealth but also of other advanced nations of the world. The Cinema should also be used to foil the attempts of the enemies of India, who have no scruples in dishonestly misrepresenting Indian culture and conditions and habits of the people of India.

## PART II.

*Social aspects and control.*

24. (a) Films containing undesirable features would have an injurious effect on the public, more especially on the youth of both sexes.

I. Women insufficiently clothed or in the nude, wherein special care is taken to draw attention to the insufficiency of clothing.

II. Men and women in indecent postures which suggest sexual desires and have the effect of stimulating sexual desires in the more impressionable of the audiences.

III. Scenes of wild orgies and revelry.

IV. Scenes which violently shake and upset the emotions.

V. Scenes of violence and torture.

(b) I have not come across whole films suggesting immorality or crime but unfortunately there are many films which have such undesirable scenes.

(c) What are known as "sex" and "crime" films are harmful, they are harmful from the point of view of public morals. Some suggestive scenes radiate thought-forms of sexual desire and would unbalance many a young person, who otherwise is fighting his lower nature.

(d) I am afraid censorship so far has not been adequate; and radical change is necessary.

(e) I have no information.

25. There are certainly differences in social customs and outlook between the East and the West, but they do not necessarily necessitate special consideration in the censorship of films in the country.

26. (a) In trying to guard against offending religious susceptibilities of any class of the community, care should be taken not to create and feed "religious" susceptibility.

27. (a) Some imported films have the effect of misrepresenting Western civilization, but I cannot judge to what extent it lowers it in the eyes of the generality of the Indian people. To the average Indian, Americans or Frenchmen or Englishmen are all alike.

(b) I have no information.

28. (a) and (b) There are many films which have a bad effect on children and on adolescents.

(1) Sensational films, which excite the emotions, crime-films, the eternal-triangle films, and sex films. They stimulate the quickly-excitability of children and adolescents in a wrong way.

29. It would be necessary to certify certain films as "For Adults Only," e.g., the Baby Week Film. "The Curse of Ignorance" should not be shown to children.

30. No, I am not in favour of prohibiting all children below a certain age from visiting Cinemas except for special "Children's Performances."

31. Censorship can be an effective method of guarding against misuse of the film.

32. The present system of Censorship in Bombay is not satisfactory, inasmuch as it does not directly represent the public. The censoring of cinema films should be in the hands of experienced social workers and educationists. I suggest that on the Censorship Board should be representatives of the Municipality, of the Merchants' Chambers, Vigilance Association (which has on its Committee representatives of about 20 Social Organisations in the city), the Collector of Customs.

33. Proper censorship need not unreasonably interfere with the recreations of the people, it should not involve falling off in the attendance at Cinemas; and it need not unduly interfere with the freedom required for artistic and inspirational development.

A Censorship Board members of which enjoy the confidence of the public would help in removing the prejudice against Cinema and would help in increasing attendance.

34. (a) It would be preferable to have one All-India Censor Board working in Bombay. (1) At present each Provincial Board is for all practical purposes working as an All-India Board, for a film passed by one Provincial Board is hardly interfered with by other Provincial Boards; this has, I understand, caused some dissatisfaction.

(b) I cannot say if this would cause any inconvenience to the trade.

(c) See answer to question 32.

(d) Bombay would be most suitable.

35. (a) See replies above.

(b) I would certainly not only not advocate but would strongly oppose appointment of a whole-time experienced well-paid officer as a Censor to be assisted by an Advisory Board of non-officials. In Bombay, we have had very sad experience of how the advice of non-official Advisory Boards is accepted by the "whole-time experienced well-paid officer," e.g., the Development Department Advisory Board and the Excise Advisory Board!

36. It would be desirable if a sub-committee of the Censor Board would see every film. Gentlemen and, I should add, ladies of suitable standing would always be available who would be prepared to devote sufficient time to the examination of films for a reasonable remuneration.

37. I have heard various complaints where one Province blames another Province for its loose censorship.

38. I have no information.

39. Posters, hand-bills, and advertisements of Cinema Performances should be censored. I came across one such objectionable hand-bill a couple of years ago.

40. I cannot say.

41. (a) and (b) A stricter control is necessary over the import of films. Some years ago, foreign films of an unmentionably obscene type were imported in Bombay. Also some obscene films were locally made. And all these were shown at one of the Bombay Cinemas—apart from more private shows at private residences—where admission was by special invitation.

42. Public Bodies and the Press could help immensely in maintaining a healthy moral tone for the cinema.

43. There should be no objection to film-producing agencies being registered and licensed and studios periodically inspected.

### **Oral Evidence of Mr. KANJI DWARKADAS, Secretary, Bombay Vigilance Association, on Sunday, the 13th November 1927.**

*Chairman:* You are a member of the Bombay Legislative Council?

A. I was a member (nominated for labour) of the first reformed Council (1921-23).

Q. And you are a member of the City Corporation?

A. I am elected.

Q. You are a public worker. You take interest also in social work?

A. Yes. I have been the Secretary of the Baby Week for three years. I was the Secretary of the Infant Welfare Society. I am also the Secretary of the Bombay Vigilance Association and the Treasurer of the Children's Aid Society.

Q. You have often been to the cinema yourself?

A. Yes.

Q. Which part of Bombay do you generally go to?

A. The Royal Opera House, the Wellington, and the Empire. I go very frequently to these three places. I go to the Imperial sometimes and the Empress also.

Q. We have been told that Indians of the middle class and of the labouring class visit Indian shows more than the western shows.

A. That is so.

Q. That is, they are becoming more and more popular?

A. Yes.

Q. You consider that the present Indian pictures produced in India are not sufficiently attractive for the educated upper class Indians?

A. They are getting better.

Q. Is it becoming popular also?

A. It is becoming popular and Indians seem to be realising it is worth while helping the Indian film productions.

Q. Do you think it is advisable to encourage the growth of an Indian film industry?

A. Yes, very much.

Q. From more points of view than one?

A. As much from the point of view of education as from the point of view of bringing a more cheerful atmosphere all round.

Q. Would it be a means of getting rid of these cheap foreign films by encouraging the growth . . .

A. More Indian films would certainly have a counter effect.

Q. The difficulty is the cost of production of an Indian film is much greater than the buying of a foreign film so that the exhibitors find it difficult they say.

A. Help could be given in some ways. I am not in the industry myself and so I do not know the details.

Q. Anyway, it would be a desirable thing to do what can be done to encourage the growth of the Indian film industry?

A. Yes.

Q. As a public man and as a politician do you think the expenditure of public money for that purpose will be justifiable?

A. Yes, very much.

Q. You think the public and the politicians will approve of it?

A. Yes.

Q. In what shape would you use the public money for that purpose?

A. Indirectly by making duty-free cinema materials,—raw goods and other things,—cameras, etc. By giving all sorts of facilities for film producers, railway concessions, use of famous buildings and other things.

Q. Assistance by the loan of materials and places?

A. Yes.

Q. You have mentioned in answer to question No. 8—"by giving scholarships for training cinema actors and actresses." On that point do you think it will be of use to send Indians to be trained in the west for acting?

A. I think it would be useful.

Q. Or would you send people already in the profession for getting perfection? My difficulty is this. Do you think you should send, for instance, raw people to be trained as actors and actresses? Do you think they will keep the Indian point of view, what the Indian acting should be? Do you think they will acquire the western method of acting and there may be a danger of their becoming un-Indianised?

A. If proper care is taken, these things can be adjusted properly.

**Q.** Many witnesses have suggested that we should send people for training abroad. I may be wrong, but a doubt crossed my mind this morning whether it will be wise to do so, whether they would get un-Indianised just as some of our men who go to the west return in an un-Indianised fashion?

**A.** I should be prepared to take the risk.

**Q.** And as a whole do you think the Indian aspect of the art would then suffer?

**A.** There would be a sort of similar training here in India. Still, I should be prepared to take the risk.

**Q.** At least to complete their education you would advocate that those who are in the line already may go so that they may acquire the perfection which is obtainable in the West? They may be sent for a short period to perfect their art?

**A.** Yes, and the best of the East and the best of the West would be put together.

**Q.** Would you advocate these facilities being given by Government?

**A.** Yes, Government scholarships.

**Q.** For any concern, or would you insist upon certain conditions being complied with by those concerns in order to be satisfied that it is genuinely Indian? You advocate certain Government facilities to be given. Supposing for instance a German company or an Italian company wants to establish business here, do you think Government should grant these facilities to such companies, or would you insist upon certain conditions beforehand that it should partake mainly of an Indian character?

**A.** That is so. I should certainly impose a condition that three-fourths of the capital should be Indian, most of the films should be Indian also.

**Q.** Most of the films produced would be Indian?

**A.** But the capital also must be Indian.

**Q.** Do you think the whole capital should be Indian or a fair proportion?

**A.** Some portion of it certainly.

**Q.** And certainly actors and actresses and other things should be Indian?

**A.** Yes, absolutely.

**Q.** Do you think that it is necessary to insist upon such conditions?

**A.** Yes, with a foreign Government here, the condition "mainly for Indians" should be imposed.

**Q.** Do you think that Indians will be able to compete on equal terms on a free trade basis?

**A.** But the foreign Government would give preference to their own people. That is the trouble. It is not only the distrust of Government but the experience of the past so many years . . .

**Q.** You would require some sort of protection against foreign competition?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You require some sort of preference being shown for indigenous industry?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** I suppose you have not thought out what the definition of "indigenous" should be?

**A.** No.

**Q.** This amusement tax, I suppose, goes to the provincial finance?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And not to the Corporation?

**A.** No.

**Q.** Do you think that your provincial resources are such that you can dispense with this tax?



A. I myself voted for this tax when I was in the Legislative Council. Since then I find most of the amusement tax money comes from the admission to the race-courses and the tax on betting. Compared to the money that they get from the race-courses and gambling, the income from the tax on the cinema is very insignificant and I do not think the provincial finances would suffer to a very great extent by dropping the tax on the cinemas.

Q. You get Rs. 7 or 8 lakhs I am told.

A. You get much more from the race-courses.

Q. What is the position in your province? Do the politicians in your province advocate any ear-marking of a particular source of taxation for developing particular things?

A. The Amusement Tax Bill introduced by the Finance Member and the Primary Education Bill introduced by Dr. Paranjypte, were practically brought together and it was said that the money that would be got would be spent for primary education. Members suggested that it might be better if it were put in the Bill that the money would be so spent. But it was said that the best brains in the financial world had given the opinion that it was not sound finance to ear-mark revenue. Revenue on the excise was formerly ear-marked for some purpose, and then it was put back into the general.

Q. You would not advocate such an ear-marking, although I see you say, "I suggest an *ad valorem* 30 per cent. import duty on all race horses imported from Australia and Europe" . . . .

A. That need not be ear-marked. There would be an understanding. Because we have to spend so much money on the cinema industry, more income has to be made and this is one of the ways.

Q. Have you any import duty now on race horses?

A. No.

Mr. Green : No duty on living animals.

A. I very strongly suggest it.

Chairman : I suppose you are looking forward to the day when India would also be equal in material prosperity with other nations and have a sporting spirit?

A. But the sporting spirit through the race-courses is doing more harm than good at present. The import of these horses is draining the country.

Q. It would be most unpopular with those people with whom the races are popular now?

A. With the big guns at the race-courses.

Q. Anyway that is your suggestion and I do not want to quarrel with it. You think that some State aid is needed for developing the Indian film industry?

A. Yes.

Q. I suppose you have heard of the quota system which is now sought to be introduced in England?

A. How does it work?

Q. If you have not heard about it or thought about it, I do not want to trouble you with questions on that subject. Have you read the resolution of the Imperial Conference?

A. Not fully, but I have seen the reference to it in Mr. Crerar's speech.

Q. You have not seen the proceedings of the resolution yourself?

A. No.

Q. You have read our questionnaire on that point I believe. I notice you do not approve of the objects mentioned in the questionnaire, questions Nos. 22 and 23. What is your objection to participating in the policy if it can assist the development of the Indian film industry?

A. I do not think it will assist for the simple reason, if I may speak frankly, I entirely agree with Lala Lajpat Rai, even if we may come to some

terms with the British interests on this point, whether the word is spoken or written, I think that that word would not be kept when it conflicts with British interests. The Government of India and the Government at home would always treat this as a scrap of paper and they will have no scruples in protecting their own, against the Indian industry.

*Q.* Supposing you make it a transferred subject?

*A.* Even then, the Government of India are far too unscrupulous to give any chance for the success of the transferred subject.

*Mr. Coatsman :* May I just ask the witness this question? We have been listening to general statements from witnesses, Mr. Chairman. As you know, on several occasions I have tried to pin witnesses to definite facts of their own experience. Mr. Kunji Dwarkadas now is making a general statement and I think it is desirable that he should give us facts to back his statement.

*A.* The facts are outside the cinema industry of course.

*Q.* You are perfectly entitled to your opinion. What we would like to have are facts on which it is based because it will help us in forming our conclusions.

*A.* Look at the history of India during the last six years and the way in which the Government are breaking word after word, promise after promise.

*Q.* I merely ask you what facts can you cite which lead you to suppose that the Government of India would be unscrupulous in the matter of protecting the Indian film industry?

*A.* As against British interest.

*Q.* Would any clash arise?

*A.* They would arise.

*Chairman :* As you are a politician, I want to know the view-point of Indian politicians on this subject. You are almost the first prominent man who has come before this Committee and therefore I want your considered opinion on the point, what the politically minded Indian public feel in the matter. I know there has been a lot of writing and talking about this subject. What I want to know is, supposing a participation policy so as to secure the promotion, so far as writing can go, of the development of the Indian film industry in this country—if it can be secured, what is your objection to it beyond the fear that the Government of India would not have it carried out?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Is that fear generally entertained?

*A.* There are two different points from which I may answer this question. I have said, both on principle and because of difficulty of practical adaptation. When I wrote about this principle, I had this in mind that we cannot have British preference through the backdoor as Lala Lajpat Rai says. The whole question is a question to be decided by India as a whole and Great Britain as a whole, and unless our political problems are solved, questions of self-government and other things, we are not prepared to come to terms with Great Britain.

*Q.* Your point of view is that India is not a real partner in the Empire although she is called a partner?

*A.* Yes. We are called a partner as many times as it suits Great Britain.

*Q.* That you have not got the political status that other partners in the Empire have?

*A.* Yes. And so long as the political and economic exploitation of this country goes on, I as an Indian . . .

*Q.* You want to use this as a lever to get equal status?

*A.* That is not merely the object.

*Q.* Is it one of the objects?

*A.* No. I am not in a position to come to terms with Great Britain. With the political and economic exploitation that Britain is carrying on and

can carry on with its position as it is now, we are not prepared to come to terms, first because it hurts our self-respect, and secondly, with the position that England has got already, she will always be able to get the better of us.

*Q.* You mean your organisation is weak?

*A.* They hold all the key positions.

*Q.* You mean you may not be able to compete on equal terms with the rest of the Empire? Your industrial position is weak, so that there can be no equality between the strong and the weak. Do I sum up your point right?

*A.* Yes, that is right. I am not saying anything excitedly but with full deliberation.

*Q.* Is that view shared by the Indian politicians?

*A.* I should think so.

*Q.* Of all classes?

*A.* Yes, more strongly than I can express it.

*Q.* So you require adequate safeguards before you enter upon any such agreement.

*A.* In this particular case I would not enter into any agreement piecemeal. The whole question must first be solved.

*Q.* You mean the whole question of Imperial Preference should be considered with reference to all matters and not merely with reference to this matter. What ought to be investigated and canvassed is how far India can partake in a policy of Imperial preference.

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* I understand that is your point of view. Now leaving the question of Imperial preference alone, what do you say to an agreement or reciprocal arrangement by which other parts of the Empire, if they want their films exhibited here, should take a certain proportion, either larger or an equal quantity of Indian films,—would it not encourage the development of Indian industry?

*A.* I cannot agree because we cannot trust any other member of the British Empire.

*Q.* Do you think it is a practical and statesmanlike thing to say you cannot trust anyone?

*A.* I should think so. No Indian politician who has gone into public questions can doubt that.

*Q.* I should be sorry if that were so. Of course we have our quarrels, no doubt about it, and our quarrels are many. At the same time, so long as we belong to the Empire, do you think this policy of distrusting each other will conduce to our benefit?

*A.* Facts are facts. My reading of the situation is that it would be folly to trust to anybody's *bona fides*.

*Q.* Very well, if that is your apprehension, I am glad you are frank. It is just as well for the Government to know what the Indian people think. Let them not be under any delusion as to what the Indian people think. My object in these questions is to get at your mind. Supposing there is a partner in the Empire who allows your Indians to settle there, where Indians are settled already and enjoy equal status with their own subjects, a partner who recognises their full equality—do you not think it would be wise to enter into an agreement with such a partner for a reciprocal arrangement?

*A.* Any arrangement that can be got at between the different members of the Empire without Great Britain's interference, I would certainly welcome.

*Q.* You want direct negotiation?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Of course you want Great Britain's assistance in the matter?

*A.* That assistance will only be given so long as it suits her interests.

**Q.** Now, I suppose you believe in getting to know each other better to remove this suspicion.

**A.** Certainly.

**Q.** And getting to know each other for vast millions of our country and also for the millions of people in other parts of the Empire can be done by means of the cinema?

**A.** But that, as I have said in my answer to question 23, applies not merely to the nations of the British Commonwealth but other nations as well.

**Q.** It is not a question of preference. Of course you recognise that you cannot do all things at one time. Supposing you had to choose; on account of our financial position and other things, of course we cannot enter into arrangements with other nations; but you can certainly arrange with the other partners in the British Empire of which you yourself are a partner. Now I suppose you will agree it is far more important for the partners of the Empire to know each other better than to know other nations better. You will concede the first position.

**A.** Of course, as things are, we are in the British Commonwealth.

**Q.** And so long as you are in the British Commonwealth don't you attach greater importance to the desire that you should know more about other parts of the Empire and that other parts of the Empire should know more about you?

**A.** India is more hurt by the partners of the British Empire than by other countries of the world.

**Q.** How are you going to avoid it? I can understand if you want to sever us from the British Empire. You are not one of those who want this?

**A.** No.

**Q.** And so long as you want to be in the Empire, this distrust and suspicion and fear of one another will be minimised if other parts of the Empire knew India better than they do now.

**A.** For that reason we need not ourselves get into any agreement about that.

**Q.** It is not we ourselves. You know the proposal was made in the Imperial Conference where all parts of the Empire took part. Now the Conference having made that suggestion . . .

**A.** The point is that India was represented there by a British official.

**Q.** India was represented by somebody sent by the Government of India.

**A.** Who was a British officer.

**Q.** I believe he was.

**A.** That is the biggest joke and tragedy.

**Q.** You are not bound by anything that the Indian delegate did. Only suggestions have been put forward that some sort of arrangement may be come to by various parts of the Empire so that they might get to know one another better. That is one object. The second object is to encourage the British Empire industry in this direction, namely, the cinema industry, so as to allow its development to the mutual advantage of all, not to the exclusive advantage of one part of the Empire at the expense of the other parts. You have given me a reason, that you are not equally strong and therefore you do not want to enter into an agreement. But as regards the other object, getting to know each other better.

**A.** It was put in a nice way like that, to make people known to each other. That is what they say. But the real object is to give a good start to the British film industry.

**Q.** Supposing you produce Indian films depicting Indian conditions—your civilisation, your great temples, your great works of art and other things so that they may get known abroad, don't you think that would advance your reputation in other parts of the Empire, where you are now being regarded

merely as coolies and labourers. Don't you think it would advance the knowledge of other parts of the Empire regarding India?

A. There has been so much mischief done already by the British . . .

Q. What is the good of talking of the past?

A. Well I should be in a better position to know that what is now being suggested will be carried out in fact, that the real Indian side will be represented.

Q. Supposing you had a committee of the Central Legislature to control this matter, would you then be prepared to agree?

A. Yes.

Q. You have no trust in the present organisation; but supposing this subject were placed in the hands of a committee of the Central Legislature to carry out these objects, to take steps to carry out these objects in consultation with the various partners in the Empire, you would have no objection?

A. To that extent there would be less objection.

Q. You see, unless we come to some mutual agreement, unless all the Governments co-operate to get the conditions in all countries known to each other, it will not be possible. You cannot send your films there as a merely commercial proposition. I may tell you from personal experience in Australia that when they saw a man like Sastri they formed a different impression of our country from what they had before. So, should you not take steps and do you not think the cinema will be a good means of educating our fellow citizens in the Empire in the conditions of the country? I may put it to you even from a political point of view because I want to discuss with you what strikes my mind. Don't think it is my conclusion. I am sure the newspapers will rate me for this. I want to have a frank talk with you on this side of the question. Well, even politically, for instance you all say India is ground down in poverty and the rest of the Empire believe India is well governed by the British Government. If you open the eyes of the other partners of the Empire to the real conditions in India, don't you think they will co-operate with you to alleviate your condition?

A. I don't think they can do much in alleviating the condition of India. But to return to the point you suggested a few minutes ago, if the whole control were to be in the hands, say, of a Select Committee of Indian elected members of the Assembly, then to some extent I should not mind.

Q. That would be useful?

A. To some extent.

Q. That is what I want to get at. If you are satisfied with the personnel which is to control this propaganda work on the part of India and to decide what should be admitted and what should be sent out, you feel you can fall in with the proposal.

A. My objection to that will be much less than before. If leaders of public opinion like Sir Purshotamdas Thakurdas, you or Mr. Jinnah and half a dozen others I could easily name, like Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Motilal Nehru, etc., if they fall in with this, I should have no objection.

Q. Not only that. Of course agriculture is the main occupation of our people. I suppose you agree with the object that in order to familiarise them with modern methods and with improved methods, so that they might draw their own inferences, the cinema is a very powerful factor?

A. It would be.

Q. And if you can show them what is done in Canada or Australia in the shape of the use of fertilisers, labour saving machines and so forth, don't you think that would be a decided advantage?

A. Oh yes, very good.

Q. Do you think you can get the help of other parts of the Empire without co-operation?

A. They would do it from the commercial point of view.

Q. It does not pay them to exhibit these agricultural department films. For instance the Agricultural Department in Australia have got films which they take round to their educated farmers in the shape of demonstration lectures and other ways. This information they gather year after year and month after month and impart to their own people. It won't pay them to send it out here. Therefore it is not a commercial proposition. It must be a case of obliging each other. We want to know what they are doing and they want to know what we are doing. That can only be done by means of some mutual arrangement.

A. Any mutual arrangement that would satisfy non-official Indian opinion would certainly be welcomed.

Q. Very well. I quite agree with that: the propaganda work, the control of the propaganda work for this object should be in the hands of Indians or a body which is composed mainly of Indians, because they know best what is wanted and what can be sent out. So with that object if a reciprocity agreement can be entered into, would you have any objection?

A. I should have no objection to any agreement to which the few names I have mentioned of Indian public men give their approval.

Q. Don't mention names. It is rather invidious. I do not want you to enter into personalities.

A. I only mentioned those names . . .

Q. As the sort of people you had in mind. Because you know all these things create invidious distinctions. You yourself might find difficulty later on. I mean the main tear in the minds of the Indian public is the consciousness of their own weakness in competing with the rest of the advanced world?

A. It is not so much a consciousness of their own weakness as much as a complete knowledge of the wickedness of others.

Q. Very well, you think sufficient safeguards should be taken in order to see that India does not suffer by any such agreement. We should be cautious and wary.

A. However cautious we are we shall always get the worse of the bargain.

Q. You are not conscious of your own strength.

A. Just now 'might is right.' It is merely a question of brute force.

Q. I am sorry I was led into that discussion but it was necessary. One of the things we are asked to investigate is how far India would be prepared to participate in this policy, and you being the first gentleman with whom I can discuss this freely, I have taken this opportunity. Now we come to the social aspect of the question. I see you are not satisfied with the present censorship; you think it is not adequate enough. Do you think there should be any different standard of censorship to be applied to this country, different from what is applied to England?

A. I don't think so.

Q. If a film is passed by the British Board of Censors, unless there is something very objectionable you would be content to take their judgment?

A. No, I would also like it to go through the hands of an Indian Board.

Q. You don't think a different standard of censorship is necessary owing to the different habits and conditions of people?

A. No, I don't think so.

Q. You see there is a very very general complaint that these cinema shows in representing extravagant portions of life, representing the extravagances of Western life, to the uneducated people here (I mean those who are not familiar with the habits of the West), convey an impression to them that makes them look with disrespect or contempt on the social usages and customs of the West and on the Westerner generally. Do you think the cinema does produce such an impression or is likely to produce such an impression?

A. I think human nature being the same here as anywhere else people do get used, people do realise that the standards and social customs and

usages are different in the West, that there is more liberty in the West than in India.

**Q. Liberty between the sexes?**

**A.** I mean the contact of the sexes and all that. All the same, people here do realise to that extent that there is this difference.

**Q.** What I mean is, does it produce in the minds of this class of people to whom I was referring, any notion of contempt or disrespect or disregard for the Westerner as such?

**A.** It is just like reading a novel, for instance, when English novels are translated into Indian languages.

**Q.** Of course you have heard of such complaints no doubt. Even the "Times of India" referred to the matter.

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Are you familiar with this class of people both in the mofussil and in the City of Bombay?

**A.** I can certainly speak for the city. It is a very difficult matter to answer a general question. All the same too much is made of it.

**Q.** There is just a chance that some people may misunderstand; but you do not think the misunderstanding is so serious as to call for any special action. You think it must be left to the good sense of the censors. Do you believe in that?

**A.** Yes, certainly.

**Q.** And do you think that inspection of every film by two or more members of the Board, that insisting on the inspection of every film by two or more members of the Board will be an adequate safeguard in removing any evil that there may be.

**A.** Yes, I quite agree.

**Q.** And do you think in the City of Bombay you can get men of sufficient standing, men who are qualified to do that work, for a small remuneration?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You think Bombay can supply them. The opinion has been expressed that it is very difficult to get men in Bombay to do this sort of work 2 or 3 days a week for about 4 hours a day.

**A.** For example, I have suggested that the Vigilance Association might be asked to do it. They could give a panel of six people who could do it.

**Q.** From your knowledge of the Indian public, you think you can get a sufficient number of Indians, both Hindus and Muhammadans, and Parsis to take part in this work?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Work they will not grudge?

**A.** It would be a labour of love. With a small remuneration.

**Q.** You would insist on the remuneration?

**A.** It is always useful.

**Q.** Well, you think it will be at any rate advisable to adopt that course in order to remove any ground of complaint?

**A.** It will make the cinema more popular.

**Q.** I mean when you go to a cinema do you pause to think whether it is a British film or an American film?

**A.** No, I just see the advertisement. If I think it is a good film I go.

**Q.** I put you that question because I have been to cinemas but I have never paused to think which country it came from. You say "I do not think British films have any better or worse standard than the American." On what do you base that statement?

**A.** Just as you say you do, I do not necessarily see whether a picture is British or American before I go to see it.

**Q.** We have tried to see a British film this week but there was not one to be seen.

**A.** That is one thing. 92½ per cent. I am told are American films and the British and everybody else comprises the rest of the 7½ per cent. Because they are not sufficiently pushing.

**Q.** I don't suppose the public cares whether it is American or British so long as it is a good film?

**A.** So long as it is a good film, I don't think the public would very much care whether it is produced in India or in America or in France.

**Q.** Do you seriously advise this Committee that social workers and educational experts should be selected for the purpose of censorship, or you will leave the choice to the Government to select a panel from which censors should be chosen?

**A.** The different Associations should be asked to nominate their own representatives. They should find out who would be willing to work. The final choice ought not to be in the hands of Government, and the Board should consist of members elected by the different bodies and associations.

**Q.** Do you know of any Government in any country which nominates an administrative body merely on the lines you suggest? Is there any precedent for it?

**A.** The trouble here is that we are Indians ruled by the British.

**Q.** That is to say, you want a change of Government?

**A.** Quite right.

**Q.** So long as you don't get a change of Government, you think that all these act as a clog in the wheel?

**A.** It comes to that.

**Mr. Green:** You told the President that you would like to see a certain amount of aid given to the Indian industry through the customs tariff. I may say straight away that I think it would be feasible to put on a very much higher tax on imported films, so I am not opposing your views in any way. But do you think that the reduction of duty on raw films and cameras will very sensibly reduce the cost of production of films in India?

**A.** That is a question which I cannot answer.

**Q.** Then we come to the question of increasing the tax on imported films. At present it works out to Rs. 37-8-0 per 1,000 ft. Now this question of protection should really be referred to the Tariff Board Inquiry, so I won't go into that. But could we in our recommendations to Government justify, apart from all economic reasons, a much higher tariff on improved films in order to keep out all but good films on moral grounds? Do you think if a very much higher duty were put on, it would keep out cheap and indifferent and second hand films to a large extent?

**A.** I don't think I am competent to answer that question. And I only referred to it in a general way.

**Q.** You told the Chairman that you mainly patronised certain theatres in the Fort which show entirely western films?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Have you by any chance seen the film called "Beware of Widows"?

**A.** No.

**Q.** I suppose you also see Indian films?

**A.** Sometimes.

**Q.** Have you seen the films called "The Nurse" or "At the Clang of Fetters"?

**A.** I have not seen them yet.



Q. I have formed the impression after watching the audience in certain Indian theatres that they very much like scenes of commotion and actual fighting and violence?

A. Yes, they certainly like that. Ordinarily exciting scenes are not bad, but sometimes they are brought out in a most brutal form, in a manner which excites the emotional side too much.

Q. Is it not the essence of all drama to excite the emotions?

A. Yes, you can excite them in a right or wrong way.

Q. You would not object, therefore, to "Hamlet," although it contains a considerable number of murders, either as a stage play or as a film?

A. I won't complain of it. It would depend upon the method of presentation.

Q. Do you think that generally the films exhibited in Bombay do exhibit those emotions?

A. Yes, sometimes, but not in a suitable manner. That objection applies to both Indian and foreign films.

Q. Your complaint really is against the lack of artistic instinct?

A. Yes.

Q. I suppose your answer to question No. 24 applies to what I have just been asking you?

A. Yes.

Q. Now, I will ask you one or two questions about the constitution of the Board. You know that the present Board consists of 6 members, and it has a paid staff. The primary inspection of the film is done by the paid staff. I believe you think that there should be a larger Board than the present one?

A. Yes, if the Board were to consist of members from different associations, as it should, then there should be a larger Board.

Q. You want representatives from the municipality, the Indian Merchants' Chamber and other bodies?

A. Yes, and I should have added the University Senate also.

Q. Who will preside over such a Board? Are they to elect their own president?

A. I have not gone into the details.

Q. Granting that you could get in Bombay a sufficient number of public-spirited ladies and gentlemen to serve on such a Board, do you think that the trade will not be handicapped in having to deal with what you may call a small parliament?

A. The Board itself will consist of 6 or 7 members.

Q. You mean that people from the different associations should be called in as assessors?

A. Yes, they could come in by turns.

Q. What will be the constitution?

A. There will be an executive committee, and they will have to leave the censoring work to others. That committee will be selected by the same Board. Now take the Vigilance Association. They could be asked to give 6 names. There will be a panel of gentlemen, from the University, from the Merchants' Chamber and other associations.

Q. Who will say which of the gentlemen should censor a particular film?

A. The smaller Board should decide it.

Q. Are you aware of the censoring work that is done in Bombay?

A. I have a very vague idea.

Q. Roughly speaking three hours' work a day.

A. I quite believe that.

*Q.* If the selection of gentlemen from the panel to examine the films rests with the Board, that Board will have to sit every day?

*A.* Yes, there will be that difficulty, but we can always get three or four people and divide the work.

*Q.* But must there be some sort of permanent organization in session. I can say from my experience that applications for the examination of films are coming in almost every day, and such applications are likely to increase. Would it then be possible to have a Board in permanent session or would it be necessary to have stipendiary men?

*A.* I should prefer to have honorary workers, but pay them a little.

*Q.* Can you pay them sufficiently to keep them continuously in Bombay in the hot weather, in the rains, in fact throughout the year?

*A.* They need not all be here, but things will adjust themselves.

*Q.* I think you are rather sanguine. I put it to you that you have not thought out the details?

*A.* Yes, there has not been much time since the committee was appointed, and we have had to rush through your questionnaire and had not much time for consultation.

*Q.* In answer to question No. 43 you said that some years ago you heard that some obscene films were shown privately?

*A.* Yes, I was actually invited, but I did not go there. People who went there told me what they had seen.

*Q.* Did you inform the police?

*A.* I asked a question in the Legislative Council within a couple of months.

*Q.* It is rather difficult to detect a crime if a question is put within a couple of months?

*A.* My question went in almost immediately.

*Q.* Did you give information to the customs authorities? Was it an imported film?

*A.* Two were imported and two were made here.

*Chairman:* How long ago was this?

*A.* Sometime in 1921 or 1922. One could get the date from the Bombay Legislative Council proceedings.

*Mr. Green:* You are aware that the customs authorities generally prohibit the importation of such undesirable films?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Is that why you say that the Customs Collector should remain a member of the Board?

*A.* Yes, that is one of the reasons.

*Q.* Have you had any complaints recently of such private exhibitions?

*A.* Ever since I asked this question in the council, information has ceased to come!

*Col. Crawford:* Mr. Kanji, you are still a Member of the Legislative Council or you were a Member of the Legislative Council?

*A.* I was a Member of the Legislative Council for Labour.

*Q.* Nominated?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Are you not very strong in emphasising your mistrust and suspicion of Government? Is it not somewhat surprising that a man like you who is opposed to the present Government should have been nominated? Did not that fact strike you as somewhat remarkable?

*A.* Not at all remarkable. It is very very difficult for me to go into the details of my nomination in 1921 when the non-co-operation movement was at its worst.

Q. But the fact of your nomination has not in any way lessened your suspicion of Government?

A. Not a bit of it.

Q. You say that the educated classes visit the Indian cinemas in large numbers, but many witnesses have told us that the educated Indians do not frequent cinemas in large numbers where Indian films are shown?

A. I think they do go in large numbers.

Q. Regarding the production of Indian films, you say it is not paying and the method of production could be improved? Is it a fact that Indian films to-day are very largely a copy of American films?

A. It is not so.

Q. You think there is a certain amount of complaint on that score?

A. I have not heard any complaint. My point is that some of the Indian producers are not building on Indian stories but are merely copying American stories.

Q. I see as a social worker you took part in the Indian adaptation of "Damaged Goods"?

A. We adapted the whole of the play into Indian story by giving Indian names. The details were Indian, for example the young man gets the disease when he is at a singing party. All the three films were seen by thousands and thousands of people.

Q. I gathered that you are generally in favour of protecting Indian industries?

A. Yes.

Q. Would you consider that the Indian film industry is a luxury industry?

A. I don't think so.

Q. Again, returning to your suspicions as to Government doing anything, do you think that the present policy of Government as regards the protection of Indian industries justifies you in holding to this suspicion?

A. Yes, because they are not doing quite enough. They are very lukewarm about it.

Q. All questions relating to protection of industries have been passed by the Legislative Assembly?

A. Yes, but take the mill industry. Government have not done their duty here. The Legislative Assembly has certainly pressed for more, but the Government has not shown much sympathy.

Q. Do you think that Mr. Neogy who is here will subscribe to what you say?

A. Of course, there is bound to be some opposition somewhere.

Q. I was only asking whether your suspicions are still strong?

A. Yes, take the Tata Industry. Certainly things would have been much better if the Government had acted earlier than they did.

Q. Now, I shall take you to the question of Imperial Preference. What is your definition of Imperial Preference?

A. I am certainly not a financier, but I have a sort of general understanding about it.

Q. You merely oppose Imperial Preference on political grounds?

A. Yes.

Q. Would you be surprised to hear that there is a sort of general opinion among Europeans to accept it only when it is to the advantage of India?

A. I shall be very glad to hear it. But as things are, even though they may look apparently to the interests of India, they won't work out in practice. It is a question of who are the parties to the agreement.

Q. You would not like it for the economic benefit of your own industries?

A. I should like to be quite ~~sure~~ <sup>sure</sup> about it, that Imperial Preference is really going to benefit our country and that one or two important provisions in the agreement will not be broken and the whole agreement smashed to pieces. It is a big agreement and one or two important provisions might be rendered null and void.

Q. I would never suggest a general agreement, but I would suggest an agreement in favour of India?

A. Under the present political conditions of the country it will never work out. That will be all right on paper, but in its practical working I shall always be at a disadvantage.

Q. Now, coming to misrepresentation, do you think generally for the advancement of the human race it is desirable that everything possible should be done to prevent misrepresentation of one community by another?

A. Yes, it is very desirable.

Q. Do you think it would advance the world's civilization?

A. I am a propagandist myself.

Q. I don't suggest that any particular propaganda is done to misrepresent anybody, but if any misrepresentation were made either accidentally or on purpose, would you be prepared to say that some steps should be taken to stop such misrepresentation in the interests of humanity?

A. I think so.

Q. You spoke of the freedom of the west as not being misunderstood largely in India. Are you one of those who advocate such social freedom?

A. I go much further than most of my Indian friends, and I would certainly desire more freedom.

Q. You would accept the standard of censorship of the west as suitable from an Indian point of view?

A. I should like that it should pass through the Indian Censor Board.

Q. Now, when you come down to religious questions, are you in favour of considerable freedom of treatment of religious subjects?

A. I think that religious susceptibilities are intensified by giving undue prominence to them.

Q. For what purpose would you allow that freedom to the cinemas?

A. For the removal of social abuses. We had the film "The Slave of Custom", it was definitely against child marriage, and I have suggested that municipal and Government funds should be used for making more films through the agency of non-official organizations for the prevention of social abuses. For the moment, to give an example, the crying need is birth control. I would certainly advocate birth control films not only by stories, but I would even go to the extent of screening the methods by which birth control could be encouraged.

Q. Could you give me your opinion on the moral standards of western films?

A. One hears so many complaints that one's own opinions get clouded by the continuous din of these complaints. There are certainly some films which are very suggestive, and I should like to stop them. The moral standards of western films certainly need some improvement on moral grounds.

Q. Could you tell me any directions in which the censorship might be tightened up? Most of the things that you have put down are already barred by the Censors?

A. But it is a question whether the terms are properly insisted upon. The censor ought to have a good deal of common sense, he must be a clearer man knowing human nature and human psychology. I hope I won't be misunderstood when I say that sex films should not be shown.

Q. Could you give me any particular kind of thing that you would like toned down?

A. I don't mind kissing and embracing. I won't mind even the insufficient clothing, but what I object to is some of the things are very suggestive and they make themselves very vulgar. I am opposed to vulgarity and obscenity.

Q. You are in favour of an All-India Censor Board. Supposing after a very careful examination we find that it is more convenient for the trade and generally for all purposes to constitute the All-India Board in Calcutta, would you have any objection to it?

A. None whatever, it is merely a question of administrative convenience. I have no provincial bias in that matter.

Mr. Neogy: I take it that you recognise that this scheme has got two aspects, one a business aspect and another a propaganda aspect. So far as the business aspect is concerned, it is a question as to whether such a scheme would effectively ensure a foreign market for Indian films. I take it that your attitude is that we should not decide the question of a reciprocity scheme, which is another name for Imperial Preference, in the case of the film industry without bringing up the whole question of Imperial Preference for discussion and adoption?

A. That is my own feeling.

Q. As far as you know about the present position of the Indian industry, do you think that on merits the Indian manufacturers in Bombay, for instance, have any reasonable chance of being patronised in foreign countries? Do you think that Indian made films will be appreciated in foreign countries?

A. No, not yet. I think the industry will have to be improved very much before our films can be appreciated by the foreign countries.

Q. Judged from that point of view, I take it that you think that even though some sort of reciprocity scheme could be devised, it would break down in practical working?

A. It will only work for the interests of the other members of the empire.

Q. Coming to the propaganda aspect, I take it that you are anxious to bring about a better understanding between the different members of the empire?

A. I am an absolute internationalist.

Q. So you don't want to confine the propaganda aspect of the question to the British empire alone?

A. No.

Chairman: Nobody has suggested that.

Mr. Neogy: But do you think that you should have any special concern for propaganda within the empire apart from propaganda throughout the world?

A. If you are going to have a general propaganda, then of course the British empire will be included in it.

Q. Now, this propaganda work has two aspects, one is to enable India to know the other parts of the empire, and the other is to let the others know her. I am confining myself to the empire aspect of the question for the time being. Do you think that India is already possessed of sufficient knowledge of the other parts of the empire?

A. I suppose we are also ignorant.

Q. Are you quite sure that the other parts of the empire are quite as anxious to know India, as India, I take it, is anxious to understand the other parts of the world?

A. It is a very big question. It is not confined to the cinema industry. I notice that there is a general desire all round to know each other better.

Q. You think that the film industry is not the only direction in which action could be taken to bring about better understanding, and there are also other directions in which action could be taken, is it not?

A. The cinema is one of the important factors.

Q. Your suspicion.—I believe that expression has been used by Colonel Crawford,—about the practical result of the adoption of any such reciprocity scheme is explained by the fact that, as we have been anxious to secure equality in so many other respects and as we have not been getting it, when this question of cinema alone is brought up for bringing about equality and reciprocity and better understanding, you are naturally suspicious about the real motive, is that your position?

A. For example, for the meetings of the League of Nations always a Britisher is appointed as the representative of India. Recently at the Naval Conference, a man who knows nothing about India, has been made to represent India. I mean the First Lord of the Admiralty. It is absurd, the whole thing is a huge joke. I believe his name is Bridgeman, and he is a man who knows nothing about India and he was chosen to represent India at the Naval Conference recently. Can anything be more preposterous than this?

Colonel Crawford: Could you suggest any Indian delegate who may adequately represent India at the Naval Conference?

A. Then why suggest that India should be represented at that conference? You could surely find any one. If the Legislatures were asked to nominate some one, they would certainly have chosen a suitable representative.

Q. Do you think the Legislature would have chosen a man who had the experience?

A. I think we could have suggested somebody who would have very adequately represented India and Indian interests.

Chairman: I don't think it is necessary to pursue this matter.

Mr. Neogy: So far as the economic and other conferences are concerned, you think that there is no paucity of Indians who could represent India very well?

A. There are any number of Indians who will be able to represent India at all these conferences, but those are the kinds of people whom Government do not want.

Q. I take it that you do not want equality in regard to cinema films before you get equality in every other respect with other parts of the empire?

A. My point is, unless you get the bigger equality, this equality will only be on paper.

Q. Supposing there is necessity for carrying on propaganda. Do you think that the trade in India should be subjected to certain restrictions in order to enable Government to carry out that propaganda—such as a company being forced to show certain kinds of films, which may not be of very great value, manufactured in other parts of the Empire, as a condition of India being allowed to export certain films to the other countries?

A. I am sure—perhaps the Chairman could tell us—but I believe in Australia they have already accepted British preference in the cinema industry.

Chairman: British films are exempted from the duty. They have not yet accepted the principle of British preference in Australia. In New Zealand they have.

A. I thought it was in Australia that films were being shown in batches—for instance the cinema people advertise that the cinema show will start at 7-30—and for the first half hour only British films will be shown. I am told that everybody knows that the first half an hour the films are shown to empty benches.

Q. There is no compulsion yet. There is a commission sitting in Australia, I don't think they have made any recommendation yet. New Zealand

has passed legislation exempting British films from duty. Even now in Australia British films are free from duty since last year. Other films have to pay duty. But the whole question is under consideration in Australia.

*Mr. Neogy:* I will put it in another way. Supposing the exhibitors here were to be asked to agree to a scheme under which they would be compelled to show certain films manufactured in other parts of the Empire irrespective of whether they are of good quality or not, as a condition to India being allowed to export certain films of propaganda value to those other parts of the Empire, are you prepared to impose this restriction on the trade in India with that object?

A. I have not had time to consider that.

*Chairman:* Would you be prepared to concede that exhibitors should be compelled to show a certain amount of Indian films in order to encourage the Indian industry?

A. Yes, I would do that. On principle I have no objection to that.

*Mr. Neogy:* Do you think it is absolutely impossible for India to enter into a sort of gentleman's agreement with any country in the world outside the British Empire? For instance, would it be absolutely impossible for India to arrive at a gentleman's agreement say with a country like France or Russia or America or Japan in regard to the film industry on the basis of reciprocity?

A. I do not know how far those industries have been developed in those particular countries.

Q. Supposing the industry is sufficiently developed to make it worth our while to try and secure a gentleman's agreement like that?

A. I should have no objection to entering into such an agreement.

Q. Are you aware that there was an attempt between the United Kingdom and the United States of America at one time to arrange this sort of gentleman's agreement with regard to exchange of films on a reciprocity basis?

A. No, I am sorry I am not.

Q. Now, coming to the question of misrepresentation of western civilisation—misrepresentation may do harm to two different sections of the people. Misrepresentation of certain kinds may injure Indian interests in so far as it gives the Indians a wrong idea of things. It would be as bad as the teaching of wrong history. And there is another effect of the misrepresentation, not upon the Indians but upon the prestige of the people misrepresented. In your recommendations about making censorship more strict, would you be prepared to pay heed to the second class of effect, that is to say the effect which such misrepresentation may have on the interests of the people misrepresented. Would you be influenced in your recommendations by any of these considerations?

A. Yes, I certainly think so.

Q. That nobody should be misrepresented, whether such misrepresentation harms the people who see the films or not?

A. Yes, certainly. And any deviation from the truth should be, I won't say strictly, but properly censored.

Q. Now, have you heard of films in which India has been misrepresented abroad?

A. I read in the Assembly debates that there were films in which India has been misrepresented.

Q. Would you have any suggestions to make to the committee to see that that class of misrepresentation is effectively stopped?

A. It is only a question of how the Government of the country takes interest in a thing like this. It would have to be done through official correspondence.

Q. So you would expect the committee to recommend to Government to take measures to put a stop to such misrepresentations?

A. Just as one would expect a really good and decent Government to take steps to stop the misrepresentations in Miss Mayo's book. On the contrary, we are told that Miss Mayo has had more than indirect help from the Government of India. You see, that is the difficulty in this country. Where generally one would look to the state for protection against misrepresentation and injury, here the state is interested sometimes in misrepresentation.

Q. Very well, we will leave that point. We will pass on to films of agricultural interest.

Chairman: Before you go to that—what kind of provision do you think the Government should make in order to avoid misrepresentation of Indians in countries other than parts of the British Empire? Supposing in Germany, India is misrepresented on the screen and we get definite information about it, what do you think would be a suitable step for the Government of India to take?

A. I suppose the usual correspondence between the ambassadors and so on.

Q. You mean political?

A. Yes.

Mr. Neogy: On that point, supposing we were to confine ourselves to the film industry for the present, and devise some means of preventing misrepresentation by taking action which might hit the particular country misrepresenting, would you be prepared to recommend that, if evidence is forthcoming that India has been misrepresented by a particular country on the screen, that the films of that particular country should be prohibited from coming into India?

Chairman: Political pressure failing, that should be done?

A. Yes.

Mr. Neogy: Now, reference was made to a certain class of agricultural films and I think it was stated that it does not pay always for any country to produce those agricultural films and to show them in other countries. But are you aware of any instances in which any class of agricultural films showing, for instance, the use of any labour saving machines, has led to the purchase or rather to the creation of a market, however small, in India for these particular types of machine?

A. No, I have no knowledge.

Q. Do you think there would be any possibility of that?

A. Yes, I think so.

Q. So, even from the trade point of view, you think it might pay certain countries to produce films of agricultural interest for exhibition in India, which might result in the creation of a market for certain implements or other things, for instance fertilisers?

A. I think it would be useful.

Q. I take it that you think that there is no likelihood of any dearth of such foreign films because the enlightened self-interest of the countries concerned would lead them to manufacture such films, for exhibition in a country like India where we have very crude implements and depend mainly upon foreign manufacturers?

A. Yes, I think so.

Chairman: Now, would you trust to that in order to educate your people? Would you trust to the foreign trader or the foreign manufacturer advertising the thing in that way for educating your people. Do you think it would be sufficient to lift them up. Or should something more be done by the Government, because after all education is more important than just waiting for the trade to do a thing.

A. Yes, I agree.

Mr. Coatsman: Do you take an interest in the cinema primarily because of its potentialities educationally?



A. Well, I personally take an interest in the cinema because I find it a relaxation to my mind and because one of the main functions of the cinema, I take it, is to relax the mind and make one more cheerful. I myself do not go there for instruction.

Q. But I think as a social worker you may be very much interested in the potentialities of the cinema educationally?

A. Quite right.

Q. Do you go to cinema shows very often? Could you say approximately how often you have been during the last two months?

A. Four or five times.

Q. That is once a fortnight. Then you don't see very many films in the course of the year. Probably 20 or 25.

A. Yes.

Q. Have you any preference in your choice of films? Do you go to Indian films?

A. No. I will tell you why I don't go to as many Indian films as I would like to. I don't go to crowded theatres where the music is not good and the atmosphere is stuffy. I cannot bear the strain of a crowded place like that. I do a good deal of serious work and I want to keep away from further strain. It is too noisy and the music is not good and it does not give me the relaxation I want.

Q. Well, it comes to this, that your experience is that Indian films are shown in the lower class of theatre.

A. At present they are shown in the heart of the city.

Q. What is the reason for that?

A. I suppose because the other cinemas are controlled by Madans and Pathe of the Royal Opera House and I think there is more business in the other films. That may be one of the reasons.

Q. You don't know whether Madans, for instance, actually boycott Indian films?

A. No, they make some Indian films themselves outside Bombay. They don't buy Indian films.

Q. But do they actually boycott Indian films?

A. That I don't know.

Q. At any rate you have never known one Indian film shown in any one of Madan's theatres here?

A. I cannot say definitely either way.

Q. Well, you have seen Indian films, haven't you?

A. Some; not many.

Q. Are you satisfied with the technique and the camera work and so on?

A. No, not yet.

Q. So, do you think that the reason why they have to be shown in the lower class of theatre is that they are not quite up to the standard of the better type?

A. Probably.

Q. Well now, in view of what you said in reply to my first question, you probably have not studied the cinema problem earnestly as a social reformer. I mean you have not kept data of attendance at cinemas, the class of audience, your impressions and so on.

A. No.

Q. Do you keep a diary?

A. I keep a rough sort of diary but not a continuous diary.

Q. But you have not studied this as a scientific subject?

A. No.

**Q.** Now, you say in your reply to question 5 "Indian produced films are not readily available in very big centres." That is a very definite statement. What are your grounds for it?

**A.** There are not a sufficient number of Indian films.

**Q.** But why do you say that?

**A.** I mean if you go through the advertisements page of the cinema, you will see that the number of Indian films is much less than those of foreign films.

**Q.** Yes, but do you know, for example, that theatres that specialise in showing Indian films have difficulty in getting them?

**A.** No, I have no information.

**Q.** You see that is a very definite statement.

**A.** I put it on the general basis.

**Q.** You live in Bombay, of course.

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Does your work take you out into the mofussil?

**A.** No.

**Q.** Then you don't know anything about what is doing outside.

Now, in reply to question 14, you say, presumably with deliberate repetition, that you are very very strongly of opinion that increasing use should be made of the cinema for educational purposes. Well now, has it ever occurred to you how your desire to see the cinema used for educational purposes is to be implemented?

**A.** It will be very difficult. It is a costly business.

**Q.** Well, how do you conceive the money for this extension of the use of the cinema for such purposes will be found?

**A.** That again brings me to the very big question of political reform. If we had the reins of government, we might arrange things for ourselves.

**Q.** Assuming that you had the reins of government in your own hands, what would you do?

**A.** Cut down military expenditure for one thing, cut down the over-paid high officials.

**Q.** I see. We had better not pursue that.

**A.** We could indirectly help the industry so that there may be more money in the country generally and more money for education.

**Q.** Well, you see that is not a very adequate statement, is it?

**A.** Instead of saying it is not adequate, it may be said that just now it does not appear to be very practicable.

**Q.** Let us consider that we have cut down the military expenditure to the very limit. You can't disband the army and carry on without executive officers. You come to an irreducible minimum. However, we will assume that you have released a certain amount of money. There will be many claims on that money, won't there?

**A.** Then the swaraj government will so help the country that the exploitation of the country will stop. There will be more money coming into the country and remaining there.

**Q.** We will go back to the question. You have got down to the irreducible minimum—you have released a certain amount of money which I think every one will admit will not be a very large amount. Supposing you reduce your military budget to half, which is an unthinkable suggestion with the present facts of the world—it does not release very many crores, and those crores have to be spread over very large areas: and think of all the crying needs of the country in other directions. So there will still not be an unlimited supply of money available. You have got to find your money. Now, you are thinking all the time of state aid being given

to this industry—you are thinking that state aid is the only solution and you are thinking of state aid as the actual handing over of cash.

A. I have not worked it out in minute detail.

Q. But has it occurred to you that this is quite the wrong way of doing things?

A. To this extent that state aid cannot stand by itself—it must be augmented by non-official effort.

Q. I think you are confusing a number of really distinct questions. You are confusing the function of the state in protecting the Indian industry with the function of the educational authorities in using the cinema more for their purposes. You must get those two things clear. I must stick to what you say that you are in favour of the increased use of the cinema for educational purposes. Now, education as you know, is a transferred subject—practically the whole of it?

A. But finance is not.

Q. Oh well, but we are talking about education. Now, in present conditions—and after all those are what we have to study—education is a transferred subject. Therefore, the increased use of the cinema in education will have to be brought about by the minister in charge of education. Isn't that so?

A. Yes.

Q. As a practical proposition the increased use of the cinema in education will have to be brought about by provincial agency?

A. Yes.

Q. It is not a function of the central government?

A. No.

Q. Now, we will go a little further. Do you think that educational ministers, ministers in charge of agriculture, public health, and so on, really ought to consider how they can use the cinema to the best advantage and use it?

A. It is their duty to. They ought to.

Q. And it is up to them and the Finance Department to find the money?

A. If you will read what I say here you will see that I say that it should be with the help of government and municipal funds and social organisations. Take the Baby Week organisation. The Governor's wife is president. We get Rs. 5,000 a year from the Municipality. The Bombay Government contribute 20,000 to the provincial Baby Week organisation and the Baby Week Committee were responsible for the films.

Q. Well, you see the drift of my questions hitherto has been to clear up this confusion which is obviously in your mind. So we come down to this, that this particular question is a provincial question.

A. Yes.

Q. Well, now, question 15. You say "conditions in India are most favourable to the development of the Indian film industry on a very large scale because of the spread of education" and so on. Now, I suppose in view of what you said that your work does not carry you into the mofussil, it is no good asking your opinion on the question of establishing cinemas in smaller places and so on. Then I come to the question of films in the British Commonwealth. And here again I would like to clear up any misconceptions. You have read of course our Chairman's pronouncement on it, and I think they satisfy you?

A. Oh yes, of course, coming from him.

Q. Then we start on that basis. Now, you hold strong views on the subject particularly of the economic relations between India and Great Britain.

A. Yes, but I am not a finance Expert.

*Q.* You will remember at a very early stage of the proceedings I asked for facts. Now, let us consider one or two facts and in doing this what I want to do is to suggest material to you which might start certain trains of thought in your mind,—that is all.—Do you happen to know what is the greatest export industry of England. You know of course that England lives on her export trade. Well, the greatest export industry in England is the cotton textile industry. Do you know what the duty on English cotton is entering India,—cotton goods?

*A.* 11½ per cent. I think.

*Mr. Green:* It is 11 per cent. You may remember in 1917 Government proposed to raise it to 13 per cent. but the Legislative Assembly would not have it.

*A.* Because it was based on some other conditions.

*Mr. Coatsman:* Well, you have that fact clearly in your mind. Do you know that of all the English industries, except possibly the ship-building industry, the cotton industry in England has been the most depressed for the last five years and is even now most depressed?

*A.* Yes, I have read about it.

*Q.* Has there ever once, during those five years, been a suggestion to abolish the duty on cotton goods entering India?

*A.* No.

*Q.* Does not that strike you as a proof of *bona fides*?

*A.* No, not a bit. They dare not do it. There is a certain limit beyond which they cannot go.

*Q.* At any rate, you admit that there has been no talk of it?

*A.* It would not be accepted.

*Q.* I would like to trench now in a way on the domain of philosophy—but it is still relevant to our inquiry—otherwise I would not do it. You describe yourself as international?

*A.* I believe in international brotherhood.

*Q.* Exactly. You would like the league of nations idea and principle to be accepted all over the world whole heartedly?

*A.* Absolutely, and given effect to.

*Q.* What is the main obstacle in the way of that consummation?

*A.* The main obstacle is the greed of certain big powers in the world, (e.g., Great Britain.

*Q.* Well, leave that aside. We are coming to that in a minute. The greed of certain big powers. But you would also say what one might almost call the natural animosities between race and race, colour and colour, bred through ages of isolation and differing traditions. Has it ever struck you that the British commonwealth including India is a league of nations itself?

*A.* It is. That is why I am in favour of maintaining friendly relations with every part of the British Empire on an equal basis, and therefore I am for it. If I thought that India should get out of the Empire, I should work against it. But I believe it is in the interests of India, of Great Britain and of the world, that we should remain together, until it becomes a real league of nations.

*Q.* I am sorry to be so round-about, Mr. Chairman, you will see the purport of this in a moment. Well, the British Commonwealth is a league of nations itself. Now, in this idea of yours of world brotherhood, I think you will admit that the most difficult part of the problem is the growth of the feeling of brotherhood between the people not only of different races but of different colours, because the facts of history show that to have separated them from one another.

*A.* That difficulty is made still worse by the whites.

**Q.** You find that in this little League of Nations, the British Empire, the most important of all problems is now being tackled?

**A.** Not honestly tackled.

**Q.** Is being tackled?

**A.** By whom?

**Q.** By us all.

**A.** Not by Great Britain.

**Q.** At any rate, do you admit that the British Commonwealth of Nations is up against the problem?

**A.** No. Great Britain simply wants to see how it can get the best advantage out of it.

**Q.** Let us assume anything you like, you admit that the British Commonwealth are up against that problem?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** We have got to solve that problem . . .

*Chairman:* I do not think you will be able to convince him.

*Mr. Coatsman:* Not that I want to convince him, but I only want to bring out certain facts. Let us say it is not being honestly tackled. We are up against it, that is a rock bottom fact?

**A.** Yes. But an attempt at whitewash is being made.

**Q.** You want that problem to be solved?

**A.** Yes. I really want to solve it, in spite of England.

**Q.** We want you to help us in that.

**A.** You want to solve it in only one way.

*Chairman:* Can you solve it in spite of England, without England's co-operation?

**A.** If England won't see it now, it will have to see in the end.

*Mr. Coatsman:* At some time you want to force her to co-operate?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** The dispelling of ignorance is the best way of dispelling fear and hatred. To come directly to our subject, don't you think that if we can get a free circulation of Imperial films from all parts of the Empire circulating in all the other parts of the Empire,—don't you think, never mind the terms on which they will circulate—but don't you think it will be of immense good . . .

**A.** There is something worse than ignorance. There is misrepresentation.

**Q.** Without ignorance there cannot be misrepresentation?

**A.** Yes. By a sort of pretending to remove ignorance you make it worse.

**Q.** I want you to fix your mind on the circulation of Indian films in the rest of the Empire and the rest of the Empire films circulating in India. You agree, provided they are true and honest films, that would dispel ignorance? Is it not worth while making an effort now?

**A.** Not now.

**Q.** I want you to remember that we are standing on our Chairman's declaration . . .

**A.** If it were left to the Committee or to the word of the Chairman,—but the final thing is not in his hands. You finish your work as soon as you have recommended.

**Q.** I do not know if you are aware, but I would like to bring to your recollection a very striking and, to my mind, a very moving incident that happened during the war. I think you will find it in the files of the newspapers of 1916. You know the Indian troops fought at Gallipoli?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** In Gallipoli there were Australian and Indian troops. After the landing in Gallipoli, after terrible fighting, an Australian soldier, remember he was merely a common private soldier,—he wrote to the Secretary of State who was then Mr. Austen Chamberlain in some such terms as this. "Before I left Australia I only knew the Indian as a darkskinned camel driver and so on. I have fought by his side in Gallipoli and my views of him and of his kind, as well as those of my comrades are entirely changed from this day onwards." As soon as Mr. Austen Chamberlain saw that letter he was so moved by it that he had it published in all the papers throughout the world, and if you look at the newspaper files of 1916 you will find that. Therefore you see the benefit of knowledge . . .

**Chairman:** I may add to that information that everywhere in Australia the Australians who had been to the war bore high testimony to the comradeship which they felt for their Indian soldiers.

**A.** And if those Indians who died in the war were to come back to life and see the position of India, they would say, "It was all very well for you to make such professions then. You have gone back upon every word of yours. You have broken your word." The only obstacle that I find in the way of the promotion of world brotherhood, international brotherhood is Great Britain, not only with regard to India but with regard to the rest of the world as well.

**Chairman:** I think we are drifting into very high politics.

**Mr. Coomaraswami:** I only wanted to see if we could come to some common ground because I do feel that the dispelling of ignorance is the greatest service that we can do.

**Q.** I just want to ask you one question about your suggestions regarding the Censorship Board. You suggest public bodies and universities and so on to choose members for the Board.

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You realise, of course, that the decisions of the Board of Censors can be legally enforced?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Can you think of any body in any country in the world similar to the one which you advocate, having such powers?

**A.** That is the difficulty. If it were my own Government I would leave it to the Government to nominate the Board.

(The remainder of Mr. Kanji Dwarkadas's evidence was taken in camera.)

### **Written Statement by Mr. N. E. NAYLE, M.L.C., dated the 4th November 1927.**

The following are the answers to the questionnaire of the Indian Cinematograph Committee:—

1. No.

2. (b) Of those attending cinemas, 70 per cent. come from the illiterate classes and the rest from the educated classes. I am referring to the conditions prevailing at the Ahmednagar City.

(a) Of the educated classes in the Ahmednagar City, 20 per cent. frequent cinema while of the illiterate 5 per cent. frequent cinema. This is about male population only.

(c) Children do not attend night shows but when matinee shows are performed they do attend. The percentage is 10.

3. Mythological and Historical.

4. No. Reasons: (1) Poor capital, (2) want of organisation, (3) want of expert knowledge, (4) no State support.

5. Yes.

(a) A few of them.

(b) A few of them.

(c) An Indian film is more profitable ordinarily. Yes. Netalji Palkar, Singhgad, Girl Mad, Alladin and his Wonderful Lamp and some others.

6. (a) Yes.

(b) (1) Those depicting Indian life, topical Indian news and scenes depicting stories from the national literature. History appeal more to the educated classes.

(2) While those depicting mythology appeal more to illiterate population and especially to women.

8. (a) No.

(b) Difficulties.—As detailed in answer to question No. 4.

9. No. High prices are charged for good films of Indian production, as there are a few producers and a few distributors. Yes, there is tendency towards monopoly, as for example, Universal, Pathe, and Madan Theatres, Limited.

11. No. If the exhibitors get representation on the Board of Censors.

14. Yes. There is hardly any demand at present; but such films ought to be popularised.

15. Yes. Given the things mentioned in answer to question No. 4, Film Industry can be built up and improved in India and the present miserable conditions removed.

16. Yes.

Producers—Mr. Baburao, Painter of Kolhapur.

Director—Mr. Bhavani, M. and Imperial Films, Bombay.

Actors—

(1) Madanrai Vakil.

(2) Balasaheb Yadav.

(3) Mr. Sohoni of United Syndicate.

Actresses—

(1) Miss Sulochana.

(2) Miss Jilla.

(3) Miss Gangu.

(4) Miss Ruby Myres.

Scenerio-writers—

(1) N. D. Sirpotdar.

(2) Baburao Painter.

(3) B. P. Mishra.

Photographers—

(1) Mr. D. D. Dabke.

(2) Mr. S. N. Patankar.

(3) Mr. Adi M. Irani.

Improvement suggested—Send a few selected people both male and female to Western Countries for special training, by giving them special scholarships.

17. Yes.

18. Adjust the tariff in such a way as will increase the cost of foreign films and put as much less duty on materials for the film production as possible so that Indian industry may be encouraged.

20. Bounty and Scholarships.

(a) Yes, it is justifiable.

(b) Yes, the higher tariff will bring in higher income. Apply it to encouraging Indian industry.

21. Against such a proposal.

22. No. The standard of encouragement should be competitive merit.

23. (a) Yes, to a large extent.

24. (a) Yes, there are a few Western films which have a tendency towards causing demoralization.

(b) No.

(c) Some of the Western Serials are harmful to women and children of impressionable age.

(d) No, in (1) and (2).

(e) Yes, in Bombay City.

25. Yes, the customs and the moral standards of the West and the East being much different do necessitate special consideration in the censorship of films in this country.

26. Yes, the Hindu-Moslem troubles now aggravated in India do necessitate more care in censoring, so as to avoid offending religious susceptibilities of either class.

\*27. Yes, some films do tend to lower Western civilization in the eyes of Indians. Yes, films representing Western life are generally unintelligible to uneducated Indians or are largely misunderstood by them. Undesirable results follow from this. Some Indians take a wrong view of the social manners and customs of the West and try to imitate them without understanding their real purport and importance and thus lead a life unnatural and detrimental to themselves.

28. Yes, films in which are shown scenes of kissing or embracing have a bad effect both on children and adolescents of either sex.

29. Yes, some shows should be certified as for "adults only".

30. Yes, children of five years and above and below 12 years of age should be prohibited from attending cinemas, except for special "Children's performances". The reason is obvious. Children between 5 and 12 years are of impressionable age and receive bad impressions by attending all sorts of shows.

31. No. Strict censorship should be coupled with appropriate legislation.

33. (a) No.

(b) Yes, to a certain extent.

(c) It may so interfere to a certain extent, but that would be justifiable.

35. There ought to be representation to Producers and Exhibitors on the Board of Censors.

40. Yes. Posters should be censored by the Board so as not to allow them to be indecent from the moral point of view of the Indians. Hand bills and advertisements may be examined by a local Magistrate before they are printed, and if he finds any objectionable part in them he may order it to be removed and allow the rest to be printed.

41. Yes.

42. Yes, one representative of the producers and one of exhibitors should sit on the Board.

44. Yes, they can assist in maintaining a good moral standard in films by taking a keen interest in shows. For that purpose representatives of Press and Social Public bodies be given complimentary passes and criticism invited through them and defects elicited and remedied.



**Oral Evidence of Mr. N. E. Navle, M.L.C., on Monday, the  
14th November 1927.**

*Chairman:* You come from Ahmednagar?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* What is the population of Ahmednagar?

*A.* Nearly 30,000.

*Q.* How many cinemas have you got there?

*A.* Two houses.

*Q.* Who are the proprietors of the cinemas?

*A.* One is Mr. Chaudhuri and the other is a Bhora gentleman whose name I do not know. He is not a local gentleman but stays outside.

*Q.* I suppose Ahmednagar is a purely Indian town?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Is there any European population there?

*A.* Of course, there is a big cantonment.

*Q.* You frequent mostly the Indian quarter.

*A.* Of course, the Indian quarter. I reside in the city.

*Q.* I suppose you seldom go to the cantonment.

*A.* Yes, I seldom go there.

*Q.* What are you by profession?

*A.* I am a pleader, a practising pleader.

*Q.* Are you connected with the municipality?

*A.* I am a Government nominated member of the municipality. Of course, I am more connected with the district local board actively and am a prominent member of the school board. We have got some magic lantern activity in the school board for children under our control.

*Q.* Yes, we have been told that by another witness. Do you frequently go to the cinema yourself?

*A.* No, I don't frequent the cinema very much.

*Q.* You are familiar with what sort of films are shown in the Indian quarter?

*A.* Indian films are shown very often.

*Q.* More often than Western films?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* They are popular with the people?

*A.* Very popular.

*Q.* Do they show any Western films in the city?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Western films generally when they come to Ahmednagar, the Western films which you see in Ahmednagar, are they much used up films?

*A.* Of course, they come there after a great circulation.

*Q.* You have seen films in Bombay city?

*A.* I have.

*Q.* Are those used up films which come to Ahmednagar injurious to the sight?

*A.* They do not affect the eyes. They are not so used up as to affect the eyes. They are shown in a proper form.

*Q.* They are not injurious to the sight, dim and flickering?

*A.* No.

*Q.* Well, what sort of Indian films are shown there?

A. Probably the Maharashtra Film Company's films are most popular.

Q. How long have Indian films been used in the city?

A. Of course, films were introduced in Ahmednagar only some 10 years back.

Q. And Indian films have been used almost from the very beginning?

A. No, quite recently have Indian films taken the place of Western films.

Q. What I want to know is Western films are not so much sold as they used to be 3 or 4 years ago. Would that be a correct inference to draw?

A. Yes.

Q. Western films are becoming less and less popular?

A. Yes.

Q. What is the reason for that?

A. I should say that Western life, their manners and customs and dancing do not appeal to the people. They read it in the wrong way. They think it is rather a different civilisation, a different type of morals that is shown in those pictures.

Q. They do not want to see them. Can you tell us, for instance, supposing a Western film were shown and in the same cinema an Indian film was also shown, which would attract the larger audience?

A. Surely the Indian film, though it is far inferior to the Western film.

Q. That is your experience.

Mr. Coatsman: Inferior in technique?

A. Yes.

Chairman: You think then it will be for the good of the people if the Indian film industry is encouraged?

A. Yes, I do strongly advocate that.

Q. For the public good, not merely for the producers?

A. Yes, for the public good.

Q. If the technique and plot, etc., could be improved, it would create a good taste in the people.

A. Yes. It would be good for the cinema-going public.

Q. Now do you consider cinema-going a luxury or a necessity?

A. I should think it a necessity, for the toiling man it is a necessity. It is an amusement and he likes it.

Q. So you would not class it as a luxury and as not deserving of State encouragement or aid?

A. No.

Q. You consider the industry one which, in the interests of the people, may be protected and should be protected by State aid. That is necessary?

A. Yes, it is necessary that State aid should be given.

Q. Of course, you have no film-producing concerns in your midst?

A. No.

Q. Have you seen any film-producing concern anywhere?

A. No, I have not visited any studios.

Q. If Western films do harm in any sense the better way of dealing with it would be to encourage the growth of Indian films?

A. Of course, that is one of the ways. The other way is to have a better censoring of Western films and to improve them also.

Q. We are not concerned with that.

A. The first and foremost way is, of course, to encourage Indian films.

Q. And you think the films which are now shown in Ahmednagar, say, for the last 2 or 3 years, do you think there could have been stricter censorship in their case?

A. Yes. As far as Western films are concerned?

Q. Yes.

A. I think stricter censorship is required.

Q. In what respects?

A. Specially I would restrict my answer to children of impressionable age and Indian women. These films rather affect their morals in a bad way—I mean scenes of kissing, embracing and various sorts of dancing.

Q. Do you think it is the women or the boys who are affected?

A. Even girls of tender age are affected. Those scenes violate their moral tendencies.

Q. What do you mean by tender age?

A. I should fix it below 18 and above 5.

Q. At 18 a girl is the mother of 2 or 3 children.

A. At this young age girls are always impressionable.

Q. You would class people below 18 as non-adults?

A. Yes.

Q. And I see you advocate some films being marked only for adults.

A. Yes, for adults only and the rest should be children's performances.

Q. But do you think there is any such necessity in the case of Indian films?

A. As far as I have seen and visited them, I don't think so.

Q. You don't think Indian films require such censorship?

A. No.

Q. It is only Western films that require such censorship?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you make out any difference between the people who visit the cinemas in Bombay and your people in Ahmednagar? Do you think a different method of censorship is needed for your city from what is needed for the city of Bombay?

A. Yes, I think the people living in the city of Bombay are able to understand Western life and Western ways and manners in a better way.

Q. Do you think a different standard of censorship is required?

A. Yes, for the mofussil and for a presidency town. All the bigger cities should be classed with Bombay.

Q. Don't you think there will be too much censoring? Do you think it would be consistent with the free development of the trade that there should be so much censoring from place to place? Don't you think it would interfere with the trade?

A. I think it would interfere a little with the freedom of the trade, but for the good of the people I recommend it.

Q. I want to know whether it is your opinion because the point has been made whether it should vary from district to district and from town to town. You don't want a local board of censors in Ahmednagar?

A. No, I don't advocate a board for a district town. A board for a presidency town is all right.

Q. Now you have a Provincial Board. I suppose they may be taken to be sufficiently familiar with the life of the people.

A. Of course, we want a better representation on that Board. Producers and exhibitors may be given an opportunity of representation.

Q. That is to say, you advocate that each film should be seen by members\* of the Board before it is passed?

A. Yes.

Q. Not merely by the Secretary or the Inspector?

A. No, there should be a special committee or committees of the Board for that purpose.

Q. Do you think each film should be passed by two or more members of the Board?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think that will secure the desired result for Ahmednagar?

A. Oh, yes.

Q. And you say Western films are not popular with the Indian public and they are growing less popular as the Indian film grows more popular. Do you think that any steps should be taken by this committee in that direction beyond merely making a statement that the censorship might be improved or that the censorship should be more strict? Do you think any further thing is needed in that direction or that the evil is so great as to call for any other remedy?

A. I do not think there is any other remedy except strict censorship.

Q. You would trust to the good sense of the censors in the matter?

A. Yes.

Q. You would not ban all Western films?

A. Oh, no.

Q. You would not ban all scenes that show sex life, ban them altogether?

A. No. We do want to study the life, manners and customs of the West, but for a certain number of years there ought to be strict censorship, because our people must get habituated gradually to those manners and customs and be able to see them in proper perspective. They don't do it now.

Q. Is the cinema a source of creating in the Indian mind in those parts any feeling of contempt or disregard for the Western nations or for Western civilisation. Does the cinema produce this effect or is it the civilisation itself that is looked down upon?

A. It is the civilisation itself that is looked down upon. The life they lead, the Indian people do not consider proper.

Q. You would not compel them to change their habits?

A. It is no use compelling them to change their habits.

Q. What is it you want? If the evil lies there it shows the ignorance of the people. Don't you think the proper remedy is education.

A. We are advocating compulsory education.

Q. But in this matter the point pressing upon us is this, whether the cinema in any serious way contributes to generating in the minds of the Indian public, whether the cinema as such is a serious factor in generating in the minds of the Indian public any disrespect or disregard for Western civilisation.

A. That is one of the ways in which, of course, people look at it. The cinema is not the only factor to bring ridicule upon Western civilisation; but as it does come into contact with the masses directly in the taluk towns and district towns the masses are able to read Western civilisation and see it through the cinema only and not by way of any direct contact with any Western people.

Q. I will ask you the question in another way. Supposing, for instance, life in the West is actually depicted on the screen without any exaggeration, what impression would it produce on the Indian mind?

A. To the lower masses it would be strange.

Q. It would be a wrong impression. On that ground you would not prevent life in the West from being shown on the film?

A. I do not advocate preventing it altogether, but I would rather censor it for some years to come.

**Q.** No drama or plot, but supposing actual scenes of life in the West are shown in the East?

**A.** Of course, ordinary life is all right; but certain things like dancing, etc.

**Q.** They do not consider dancing good. They do not consider mixed bathing in bathing costumes good. When, for instance, they see in the "Times of India" pictures of ladies and men bathing together, does that offend them?

**A.** Well, people would read that in a different way.

**Q.** But do you advocate that the "Times of India" should be censored?

**A.** The masses do not come into contact with the "Times of India." I am particularly talking of the lower strata of society.

**Q.** That is what I want. You say they have got different notions; but on that ground, unless there is misrepresentation, do you think censorship should even go to the extent of shutting out actual life?

**A.** Yes, I do to a certain extent, and for some years, until the masses are habituated to studying the manners and customs of the West in a proper light.

**Q.** Excuse me. Would this not be the means of making them study it in a proper light, by making them familiar with those conditions of life? Is that not one aspect of the question?

**A.** There should be a slow study, otherwise if they see it as it is all at once it is not good. The cinemas are visiting the villages just now.

**Q.** Is the cinema going to villages now? What are the other towns in Ahmednagar.

**A.** There is no regular cinema anywhere else, but the travelling cinema visits Sanganner sometimes from Nasik.

**Q.** There is no other place where there is a cinema house?

**A.** No, except Ahmednagar there is none.

**Q.** And have you seen these travelling cinemas.

**A.** I have seen one at Sanganner.

**Q.** Do they show Indian pictures?

**A.** Yes

**Q.** Then there is no trouble about Indian pictures. I am now concentrating your attention on foreign pictures. You say they are becoming less and less popular. Therefore Indian pictures are taking their place even in Ahmednagar. I want to know whether the evil you apprehend is so great as to call for any drastic remedy from the hands of Government.

**A.** I would not go further than rather strict censorship. But for children, as I have stated in my note. . . .

**Q.** You want children's days and certain films marked only for adults.

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Can you give us an instance of any film which you have seen which had this tendency which was shown in Ahmednagar. Can you say I saw such and such a Western film?

**A.** I cannot name any particular Western film, but these things are of common occurrence.

**Q.** What you object to is a common occurrence in every film.

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** What do you mean? You object to scenes of kissing?

**A.** Kissing, dancing, embracing and all those things.

**Q.** Even if the characters are well clothed?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** As an educated gentleman do you think it is possible to ban those things or censor those things even for a mofussil town.

A. I think it is necessary.

Q. Do you think it is good in the public interest.

A. In the larger sense it may not be good because it would interfere with freedom, but for the good of the people it is advisable for some years.

Q. No trade can thrive under such circumstances, do you agree?

A. But for the ultimate popularity of Western films consorship in that direction for some years is required—for a short period.

Q. But you cannot give us any instance of any film to which you take exception. It is only a general impression.

A. Yes, a general impression.\*

Q. Have you or anybody else in Ahmednagar ever, through the municipality or otherwise, complained to the provincial Board of Censors about that?

A. No.

Q. Have you got a local press?

A. No. There is no newspaper in Ahmednagar.

Q. Have any complaints ever gone from any citizens of Ahmednagar about these films at any time?

A. None. It is not customary with Indian people to complain to papers and to the press about such things.

Q. I mean was there any demand from public workers or social workers in Ahmednagar that there is an evil which calls for remedy before this Commission was started. Was there any thought bestowed on this subject or did this Commission provoke these thoughts?

A. Of course this Commission provoked these thoughts, though the evil already existed.

Q. Now do you take much interest in politics?

A. Yes I do.

Q. What will be your view—have you seen the Resolutions of the Imperial Conference about the cinema industry?

A. I have read in the papers.

Q. What is your view, supposing some method can be found by which India could adopt the policy advocated at the Imperial Conference so as to benefit her own film industry; what is the public opinion about it there?

A. They don't make any difference between any Commonwealth film and the American or German film. Western films are looked upon as apart from Indian films.

Q. Supposing Empire films can be produced to remove those evils you complain of?

A. They will be welcome.

Q. You know of course that most of the films now shown are American?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you seen Indian characters depicted in American films?

A. No.

Q. With that object, supposing Empire films are produced in order to remove these evils you complain of, would you give preference to such films?

A. They would be welcomed in India.

Q. And would you enter into some arrangement in order to produce such films?

A. I have not thought of any arrangement of preference, but any Western films, deprived of these things which are looked upon from a different point of view by Indians, will be welcomed in India.

**Q.** Its effect on the people of the country, is it from that point of view alone, not from the point of view of encouraging the industry, from the point of view of improving the quality of films shown to the public? If as you apprehend, for some time to come stricter censorship is needed for these Western films; for instance, you cannot, of course, get into any agreement with other nations but you can enter into some arrangement with Britain and other parts of the Empire, so that they might send only films which do not depict those aspects of life to which you object, do you think it would be a wholesome arrangement to make?

**A.** Oh, yes, it would be, provided they are not costly to the exhibitors, more costly than the American films.

**Q.** That is a point I want to be clear about. Do you think it will pay the trade to have such films only. The trade will suffer, won't it?

**A.** The trade will suffer naturally.

**Q.** Now, do you think if some method of reciprocal arrangement with the various parts of the Empire in order to encourage correcter knowledge of each other to be adopted, it would be a good thing? That is one object; another is to encourage each other's industry in that direction; would you advocate such an arrangement?

**A.** Of course, for a better understanding of the countries and for the betterment of the trade itself such an arrangement would be welcome, provided, as I said, the films are not more costly.

**Q.** Supposing you allow things to continue as they are? You say these American films are cheap. They are able to produce and make profit in their own country in a short time, so they are able to sell those films to other countries very cheap. Indian films are very costly and to make them more attractive to the Western market would make them much more costly. On free trade principle the Indian film industry is not likely to thrive. Do you recognise the fact?

**A.** I do.

**Q.** Do you think that steps should be taken to get international value for Indian films? Without such an extraneous arrangement it is not possible to get that international market?

**A.** Of course.

**Q.** And if such extraneous arrangement can be made either with Britain or with other parts of the British Empire, would you approve of it?

**A.** I would approve of it if Western films were to be confined only to Empire films.

**Q.** But I mean a preference should be given by a reciprocal arrangement if you can possibly do that, the main object being the encouragement of the Indian industry.

**A.** If the main object is to encourage the Indian industry then I do welcome such an idea.

**Q.** The encouragement of the Indian industry is to be secured by finding a market abroad?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** If some such arrangement could be devised, you think the public would approve of it?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You think it is a wholesome object to get various parts of the empire better known to each other, and you think that the cinema is an effective method of so knowing?

**A.** Yes, and any attempts made in that direction will be welcomed by the people, provided the main object of encouraging and developing the Indian film industry is honestly kept in view and not merely on paper; provided also the outside markets are not made dearer to the exhibitor, otherwise they would go on purchasing American films.

**Q.** Supposing you make the non-Indian films more costly, will it be helpful to the development of the Indian film industry?

**A.** I don't think so. Does this question refer to tariff, sir? If so, I would certainly advocate a higher tariff.

**Sir Haroon Jaffer:** Is there any direct increase in crime due to the influence of the cinema?

**A.** I don't think so.

**Q.** I suppose the amusement tax is paid in Ahmednagar by the cinema people?

**A.** It is not levied there.

**Q.** Do you know that it is levied in Bombay?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Is it a handicap to the improvement of the Indian industry?

**A.** I don't think it is a handicap.

**Q.** Then you think it is a good thing?

**A.** Yes. Government ought to get some revenue from that source.

**Q.** How is this Amusement tax used by Government, do you know?

**A.** I suppose it is ear-marked for educational purposes though it is merged in the general revenues.

**Q.** Do you think a part of this income should be set apart for starting some schools for training actors and actresses here?

**A.** It would be a good thing.

**Q.** What other help, in your opinion, should be given by Government to this industry?

**A.** I think they should give bounties also.

**Q.** You have said something about the tariff?

**A.** Yes. I have also suggested that scholarships should be given to competent students and they should be sent abroad for further study.

**Q.** Should these scholarships be given by the producing companies or should they be given by the Government?

**A.** They should be given partly by Government and partly by producing companies.

**Q.** What other help should Government give to this industry?

**A.** Government should not bear the whole of the expenses of giving scholarships. The companies should select some good actors and they should give scholarships, and a portion of the amount of scholarships should be borne by Government; that is to say, a portion should be paid by the producing companies and the rest should be borne by the Government.

**Q.** Are there any producing companies in Ahmednagar?

**A.** No, none.

**Q.** Are there any good actors or actresses?

**A.** No.

**Q.** You don't find any except in Bombay or in one or two places like Kolhapur?

**A.** I don't know anything about it.

**Q.** If you want more men you can get more actors and actresses?

**A.** Yes, we can get more men, but the actresses that we now get are of a very low social standing.

**Chairman:** How do you know that?

**A.** That is the general impression. In the Indian film companies the actresses are not drawn from higher society. People look down upon the profession of taking part in a cinema.

**Sir Haroon Jaffer:** They come from respectable classes or from prostitute classes?



A. As far as actresses are concerned, most of them come from the prostitute classes.

Q. What about the actors?

A. Some of them come from the middle classes.

Q. What steps should be taken to attract respectable people into the trade?

A. Unless they become familiar with the cinema and cinema acting, they will not come in.

Q. They have all become familiar with these things by now, have they not?

A. They are now becoming familiar.

Q. Are they coming forward?

A. Some of them are, because the male actors in the Maharashtra Film Company cannot be said to belong to low society. There are good men belonging to the middle classes, I don't say they are drawn from the higher classes.

Q. I understand the audience in Ahmednagar consists mostly of Hindus and there are very few Muhammadans?

A. Muhammadans do visit these theatres in large numbers.

Q. On the screen I suppose you find the captions in Urdu also?

A. Urdu is not found on the screen.

Q. How do they understand the plot?

A. They understand Marathi well. They can speak and write Marathi well. There are also Hindi characters on the screen.

Q. Don't you think that if the captions are written in Urdu also more Muhammadans will patronise the cinema theatres?

A. It would certainly be a good addition.

Q. If the exhibition of dances is taken away, don't you think there will be less patronage?

A. I don't think so.

Q. That is what the exhibitors have said, i.e., if these dances are removed, very few people would come and patronise their shows?

A. I don't think so. People are not coming to the theatres merely to see the dances.

Mr. Coatsman: Mr. Navle, you are a Member of the Bombay Legislative Council?

A. Yes.

Q. For how long have you been a member?

A. For the last five years.

Q. Do you take an active part in the work of your Council? Are you a member of the Committees?

A. I am an active member of the Council for the last five years.

Q. So you really know your Council well?

A. Yes.

Q. Has the Bombay Legislative Council ever taken any interest as a council in this matter of the cinema? For example, have any resolutions on the subject been moved by any one?

A. I cannot remember.

Q. Have any questions been asked?

A. I don't remember.

Q. In fact, the Council as a council has not taken any specific interest in the matter?

A. No.

**Q.** From your knowledge of your council, do you think it would boycott any proposal to spend public money on the extension of the use of the cinema in Education, Public Health and such other allied objects?

**A.** I think the council will be ready to grant money for educative purposes only.

**Q.** Do you think they would display more interest in the use of the cinema film in education than say Public Health or Agriculture?

**A.** Agriculture and Public Health are, of course, as important subjects as education, but I think the council will be prepared to consider sympathetically any proposal for the extension of the use of the cinema films in the realm of education.

**Q.** What are your personal views on the subject of educative propaganda?

**A.** I am strongly of the opinion that such propaganda should be encouraged.

**Q.** Suppose the Minister in charge of education proposes to divert a portion of the funds at his disposal to sending round two or three cinema shows to schools and colleges, you would be prepared to accept his proposal, that is to say, you would be prepared to agree to spend money for that purpose out of his present resources for education?

**A.** Provided, of course, it does not come in the way of the spread of primary and compulsory education. The various District Boards and Municipalities are spending money on compulsory education schemes, and if money were diverted for sending round cinema shows to schools and colleges from the present resources set apart for education, there will be complaints. Already Government is saying that they have not got enough funds for fostering primary and compulsory education.

**Q.** Have you considered this matter very carefully, whether the use of the cinema in education is so important that it should take the place of a certain part of the extension of primary education? That is to say, would you think that it would be better to start only 10 new schools this year instead of 40, and spend the extra money on the cinema?

**A.** I would not think like that. I would go in for the spread of primary education first. I don't mean higher education, but I want to start with primary schools in preference to the cinema. But if Government were to spend a little extra money for starting cinema shows, it will be very good.

**Q.** Let us take another point of view. Would you, for example, be prepared to agree to opening as many dispensaries as you might open instead of spending money on the cinemas?

**A.** I would certainly advocate dispensaries, because they would bring about a better cure.

**Q.** At any rate, you think that the use of the cinema for such purposes is really desirable, and if some money can be found, it ought to be utilised in this manner?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** What is your constituency?

**A.** Non-Muhommanadan, Ahmednagar Rural.

**Q.** What area does it cover?

**A.** It covers Ahmednagar district only.

**Q.** What is the population of that district?

**A.** It is about 7 lakhs, and the biggest town in Ahmednagar has 30,000 population nearly.

**Q.** How many cinema houses are there?

**A.** There are two houses.

**Q.** How is the rest of the population distributed in the Ahmednagar district? How many places do you really call towns?

A. There are 11 talukas including Sangamner, which has a population of 10,000.

Q. What is the population of the smallest town?

A. About five thousand. There is a travelling cinema at Sangamner.

Q. Do you think a cinema theatre will pay in any of these towns?

A. At Sangamner it will pay.

Q. Have you any idea why there is no theatre there?

A. Somebody must go there with the idea of starting a cinema. It would certainly be a paying thing.

Q. Do you think you can have a permanent theatre in the smaller towns?

A. I don't think so; permanent houses would not be paying.

Q. In reply to our Chairman you have said that some of these travelling cinemas show Indian films?

A. Yes, but sometimes they show western films as well.

Q. Were the films you saw in good condition?

A. Yes.

Q. Apart from this taluka town in your district, you don't think there is any chance for opening a permanent theatre?

A. I don't think so.

Mr. Neogy: You have not been able to give us an instance of any foreign film which you consider objectionable?

A. I don't remember the names.

Q. Could you give us the name of any particular film which, from your point of view, you consider to be a model film and which could very properly be shown to the villagers in Ahmednagar?

A. I have seen certain good films when I was in Bombay, and I think there are some which could be shown with profit in our district.

Q. I take it that you recognise that the cinema provides good recreation?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think that if very serious subjects form the theme of the pictures they would find greater patronage than the lighter themes?

A. In my opinion lighter things would appeal more to the masses.

Q. Supposing there were two cinema theatres, one showing comparatively serious western films and the other showing lighter films, which theatre would draw a better audience?

A. Of course, the one which shows the lighter films.

Q. From the financial point of view the theatre which shows lighter films would be a success?

A. Yes.

Q. You take exception to dancing, kissing, and bathing costumes. May I take it that your objection also extends to short skirts favoured by the European ladies at the present moment?

A. Yes.

Q. Would you show pictures depicting short skirts before a rural audience in the district of Ahmednagar?

A. It would not be a proper subject.

Q. So, in your opinion, films containing pictures of such short skirts should not be shown to rural audiences, that is to say, they should not contain any representation of the ladies wearing their present form of dress?

A. Yes.

Q. You are a practising lawyer?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think if the scenes of a court of law or pleaders arguing cases were to be exhibited or scenes showing Europeans working at their desk in their office were to be shown, you would enjoy that as a good recreation or relaxation, supposing a photograph of this committee taking evidence were shown, would it be very attractive to the rural audiences in Ahmednagar district?

A. I don't think so.

Q. In your scheme of Empire reciprocity, to which reference has been made by the Chairman, do you contemplate the total prohibition of the present type of foreign films that are being shown? That is to say, when you have a better type of Empire film being shown you do not contemplate that the American films of the present type should be excluded altogether?

A. I have never advocated it. Preference may be given to Empire films to a certain extent.

Q. You said that in giving that preference care must be taken to see that the Empire films do not cost the exhibitor more than the present American films?

A. Yes, otherwise that would mean an indirect taxation on the audience itself.

Q. I take it that when you make that statement you are anxious to avoid any loss that might result to the exhibitor from any policy that might be adopted?

A. Yes.

Q. You are not confining yourself to the question of the price which is fixed upon a particular film. That is to say, if by showing a particular film—although it might be quite as cheap as an American film—the exhibitor were to make less money than the American film, you would object to that?

A. Yes, I would object to that.

Q. Very well. Now, the policy which you have recommended to us is that a more serious kind of film produced within the Empire, should be given preference?

A. Yes.

Q. I think you have admitted that the serious kind of film will draw smaller audiences. Don't you think if side by side with these, some of the American films of the present type—which you don't propose to ban altogether—were to be exhibited, that the people who were exhibiting the serious kind of Empire films would lose on the transaction?

A. I don't know, because by "serious" I don't mean devoid of any fun or any interest. Not so serious as not to appeal to the masses, but which may be relished by them.

Q. It would be of great advantage to us if you would name a particular film which complies with that description.

A. I am sorry I cannot think of one.

Q. You don't propose to impose the standard of films which you would recommend for the rural population of Ahmednagar to be adopted for the whole of India?

A. Well, not in all parts. For instance, in Sind conditions are different.

Q. Exactly. That is to say, you won't mind if those films to which you have taken exception were to be exhibited, just as they are at present exhibited, to audiences in big cities and more advanced parts than the rural areas of Ahmednagar?

A. Yes.

Q. And your remedy is to have a stricter censorship?

A. Yes.

Q. I don't know whether you intend the censorship to follow a uniform standard in the case of every film?

A. No, for big cities it might be a little different.

Q. Your proposal is that the censorship board should give certificates specifying the places in which a particular film could be exhibited?

A. Yes. Especially travelling cinemas in rural parts ought not to exhibit objectionable pictures.

Q. As far as the effect of films upon people's judgment about the standards of different civilisations is concerned, I want to know just one thing from you. Don't you think there is a tendency on the part of people belonging to any particular civilisation to consider that civilisation to be superior to any other. It is a natural tendency.

A. I don't mark it like that.

Q. I mean, don't you think Indian civilisation is a thing to be proud of?

A. Of course, we are proud of our civilisation.

Q. And, I think, you consider Indian civilisation to be superior to any other civilisation, for instance, in regard to sex relations, morals and so on?

A. Yes.

Q. So that when you say that a film has led to a lowering of the people's estimation about the western civilisation, do you mean to say that but for these films the Indian people would have a higher regard for the western civilisation?

A. No, I don't think so. But it is bringing it into ridicule.

Q. So you are not prepared to lay the entire blame at the door of the film?

A. No.

*Colonel Crawford:* You mentioned, during the course of your oral evidence, the question of children's performances.

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think it would be practicable to have children's performances in India at present?

A. Yes. For that purpose I have advocated all-India legislation.

Q. Now, what type of films ought to be shown?

A. Very light films such as would appeal to children of tender age.

Q. Do you think such films are available to theatre-proprietors?

A. Well, at present they are not; but they ought to be specially constructed for that purpose.

Q. Do you think it would be a paying proposition?

A. Oh, yes, special children's shows. It would be a paying proposition.

Q. The producers simply laughed at the idea altogether. They said: No, there is no money in it.

A. Money would come.

Q. You can't suggest where we could get such suitable films?

A. At present there are none in India—made specially for children.

Q. How would you propose to carry out such a proposition?

A. Of course, I can point out the way. If there is legislation that only certain productions should be set apart as children's productions and children's performances, then the story writers may write scenarios of the kind wanted.

Q. I very much doubt if they would take it up unless there is a certain return on their expenditure.

A. I think it would be a profitable concern.

Q. I also gather from your oral answers to-day that you do not consider the moral standard of the existing western films is very good,—of a fair proportion of them, that is, do you consider that the scenes you see represented in western films are true to the life of the west?

A. Perhaps, the life of the west may be just as it is depicted on the screen.

Q. You have never been to the west?

A. No, and so I am unable to say.

Q. But do you take the scenes shown as being correct?

A. Yes, I think western life is properly depicted in the scenes.

Q. Do you think that Europeans normally go to these cabarets and go in for carousing and that that is a normal part of western life?

A. Well, I should think it is their normal life.

Q. Now, so far as that type of life—we will take it as correct—is shown in India, are you in favour of its being shown in India or are you against it?

A. I think for the better understanding of the east and the west, there ought to be a strict censorship of certain type.

Q. You are anxious as an Indian to have your own Indian standard of censorship—what suits yourself and not worry about the ways of other people.

A. Of course, for western civilisation to be properly understood by the Indian people, for example, it is at least necessary that such scenes should be censored.

• Q. You don't think western producers have been inclined to over-emphasise the bad side of life?

A. Perhaps they might be in order to attract low society to the cinema.

Q. From what you have seen of the films?

A. I have not seen western life myself, so I am not in a position to say myself, but I think they might be exaggerating.

Q. Now then, as regards religious subjects, are you in favour of a pretty wide freedom to Indian producers when dealing with Indian religious subjects? As regards the depiction of religious subjects on the film, do you think there should be some definite limitations as to what can be shown in this respect or would you give a pretty wide freedom to the producer to call attention to anything?

A. There ought to be a wide freedom but that freedom should not infringe the freedom of other co-religionists. There should be nothing offensive to others.

Q. Do you think it is possible in India, under present circumstances, to produce any religious films?

A. There are certain films which depict the Indian religious life.

Q. Have you seen the film "Sacrifice"?

A. No, I have not seen "Sacrifice."

Q. Well, coming down to the question of foreign films, I gather you are in favour of the exclusion of American films.

A. No, I am not.

Q. I would put it to you in another way. Do you think that we should allow any country to get a monopoly of foreign films in this country?

A. Well, that is really undesirable from the western point of view.

Q. No, I am thinking entirely of India. I don't mind what the west wants. So far as you yourself are concerned, do you consider that it might be necessary to suggest legislation against any monopoly? Supposing, one country—it may be America, it may be England or it may be Germany—got a large amount of finance and got the entire monopoly of showing films in India, do you think it would be a sound proposition?

A. No, monopoly in such a thing is bad.

Q. Would you rather go in, so far as western films are concerned, for a free market?

A. Yes.

*Q.* And would you suggest our undertaking legislation to secure that?

*A.* Well, by undertaking such a legislation, if films become rather dearer to the Indian exhibitor, it would be undesirable.

*Q.* Would it not make it dearer if you kept an open market?

*A.* If there is competition there is hardly any difficulty in the way of the exhibitor.

*Chairman:* Is there any competition now?

*A.* There is no competition worthy of the name.

*Q.* I mean, is there any legal prohibition of competition?

*A.* No.

*Colonel Crawford:* You don't want to see any country have a monopoly of western films in India?

*A.* I don't like monopoly.

*Q.* In fact, you would go so far as to undertake legislation in order to prevent monopoly?

*A.* There ought to be a free market for western films.

*Chairman:* I don't understand what you are driving at.

*Colonel Crawford:* What I have in mind is the possibility of any big combine. We take it that already you have one large house monopolising an undue proportion of the existing theatres. You may get now interests from a foreign country putting up a lot of money to buy up the whole of the interests in the country in order to secure the market for the films of that country.

*Chairman:* You mean monopoly to control the theatres?

*Colonel Crawford:* In particular, by whatever means it does it, getting the monopoly of the Indian market.

*A.* The thing is, if the present circumstances of western films are to be on a competitive basis and if under such competitive circumstances America or any other country gets the monopoly, then we have no special ground of complaint.

*Q.* No, that is a different matter. All I ask you is, are you in favour of our undertaking legislation that would keep the market, so far as western films are concerned, an open market, films being judged entirely on their merits?

*A.* The thing is, at present it is open for all. How can you, by legislation, make it more free or more open?

*Q.* I don't think you follow. If under existing conditions, one country has secured a monopoly of the trade, do you consider it desirable that we should take some steps to prevent that monopoly?

*A.* From the purely Indian point of view, I would not undertake any legislation unless it is profitable to the Indian exhibitor. Unless it produces results profitable to the Indian exhibitor, I would not go in for such legislation because it is not India's concern at all. Of course, I have already said that India should be better known to the Empire and the Empire to India, but I wouldn't go in for State legislation to wrest the monopoly from America or any other country.

*Q.* You are quite satisfied even if America can get the monopoly or Germany, or indeed we will take it that England gets the monopoly.

*A.* I would not touch it. So long as the conditions are free.

*Q.* So long as there is free trade?

*A.* I won't advocate any special legislation to take away the monopoly from a certain country, whether it is England or any other.

*Q.* Well, do you understand the system on which many films are now hired out to exhibitors?

*A.* No, I have no idea.

Q. Some producing company produces a big film which the exhibitor wants to exhibit in his theatre; and to take that film they force him to take a lot more pictures so that the whole of the programme for the year is full of that one particular company's production.

A. Well, that is an indirect way of getting pressure on the exhibitor and screwing more money out of him; forcing the whole programme on him. That is, of course, undesirable unless it is profitable to the exhibitor; because my point is this that unless the exhibitor is protected, the Indian film industry won't grow at all.

Q. We can make a separate arrangement for the Indian-producing industry by having a quota system for Indian films. I am now talking of whatever proportion of western films come into the country, are you for an open market?

A. Yes. Let all countries come in and let the films compete on their merits.

Q. Even to the extent of our undertaking legislation against anybody closing it from being an open market?

A. I have not understood how legislation would be undertaken. As a legislator myself, I don't think it is practicable.

Q. Well, that is a question for examination. However, you are for an open market.

A. Yes.

### **Written Statement of Major W. ELLIS JONES, M.L.C., J.P., dated 1st November 1927.**

I have no views on the question under Part I but in reference to Part II, I beg to submit to the consideration of your Committee, the following:—

24. (a) Yes.

(b) No.

(c) The class of film depicting so called "Society Life" in Europe and America, these types of pictures are harmful to young people of all races and must convey to the uninformed Indian an entirely false view of the women of these Continents; one picture I have in mind "Sally, Irene and Mary" conveyed the impression that the large part of the chorus girl population of New York were pure courtesans and that theatrical promoters were little less than procurers. An English lady of my acquaintance stated that she did not think her boy of 16 should see a picture of this nature.

(d) No. I have seen several pictures in which women were clearly depicted as kept women, and a picture some time ago produced in Calcutta portrayed a woman as a mistress of a Bengali man, the female character was taken by an Englishwoman, whilst the male was taken by a Bengali and this film had passed the Censors in Calcutta and Bombay, although I believe, that when attention was drawn to the scene to which I refer, it was further censored.

In regard to crime films, the performance of the crime is allowed to appear, and this must create interest in a certain type of curious youth.

25. Yes.

27. (a) Yes. This point I have dwelt on under 24 (c).

29-30. Yes. 14 years.

31. (a) Yes.

32. No. Each Presidency should have its own Board under a salaried whole-time official as Chairman of the Board which should consist of at least 15 members, four of whom should be Europeans and the remainder should consist of such races as are representative of the District in which the film is passed for exhibition, three members together with the Chairman to form a quorum and all members of the Committee to have power to enter any cinema



theatre and if not satisfied with the film call upon the Chairman for another official inspection.

34. (a) No. No film should be passed for exhibition generally in India.

35. (a) and (b) No. Touched under 32.

36. (a) No. Touched under 32.

(b) I think a committee on the lines I have suggested could be found as there would be no great pressure in view of the number and the further check of visitation would be reasonable safeguard.

45. (a) All film producing agencies should be registered and licensed and the license be liable to cancellation should any Board of Censor deem the material issued by the Company such as to require on 5 occasions such censoring as to render the film practically useless; there to be no appeal from this decision.

### **Oral Evidence of Major W. ELLIS JONES, M.L.C., J.P., on Monday, the 14th November 1927.**

*Chairman:* Where do you live, Major Ellis Jones?

A. Bombay.

Q. And your business is in Bombay?

A. Yes.

Q. Your experience is mostly confined to the city of Bombay?

A. And occasionally up-country.

Q. What takes you up-country?

A. Business.

Q. By up-country, you mean?

A. Nearly all over the place, Nagpur, Kolar, outstations generally.

Q. You say in your answer (of course you have confined yourself to the second part), in answer to 24 (c) you say:—"The class of film depicting so-called 'Society Life' in Europe and America, these types of pictures are harmful to young people of all races and must convey to the uninformed Indian an entirely false view of the women of these continents; one picture I have in mind 'Sally, Irene and Mary' conveyed the impression that the large part of the chorus girl population of New York were pure courtesans and that theatrical promoters were little less than procurers; an English lady of my acquaintance stated that she did not think her boy of 16 should see a picture of this nature." May I ask where you saw this?

A. In Bombay, at the Empire Theatre in Hornby Road.

Q. When was it?

A. About six months ago.

Q. Do many uninformed Indians go to the Empire?

A. Yes.

Q. What do you call uninformed Indians?

A. The lower working class.

Q. Do you think the lower working class attend the theatres in the Fort in large numbers?

A. A fair number do. The difficulty is that one of the points is that this theatre is in conjunction with a theatre that is in the bazaar, The Empress, and the same picture proceeds there.

Q. You don't know whether it was screened there?

A. It probably was.

Q. Of course we have had evidence—I don't know whether you know it—that most of the pictures shown in the Indian quarters are Indian and they are becoming more and more popular.

A. That is so.

Q. Very few western pictures are shown in these quarters. Now, of course, your objection to this film "Sally, Irene and Mary" is not confined to the Indian, but you say "generally whether English or Indian." It ought not to have been passed for any audience?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think that such pictures are commonly exhibited?

A. No.

Q. It is rather an exception from that point of view?

A. Yes.

Q. You see it is rather a difficult proposition we have to get at. What you have in mind I want to find out. You have not seen any cinema shows in the country parts?

A. Yes.

Q. Where?

A. Whenever I have visited up-country stations I have visited the cinema.

Q. In the Bombay Presidency?—in cities like Poona, Ahmedabad and so on?

A. Yes.

Q. But not in the district quarters?

A. No.

Q. You think that there is a class of pictures which are exhibited now which convey to the Indian an entirely false view of the women of the west?

A. Yes.

Q. What is your suggestion?—that they should be banned altogether?

A. Well, such low cabaret scenes should be deleted.

Q. Do you think there is any difference in that class of pictures you have in mind between the British product and the German product or the American product?

A. Yes, the pictures shown here are not of as high a standard as those shown in England.

Q. I suppose you know that most of the pictures shown in England are also American?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think they show a better standard in England than in India?

A. Yes.

Q. Can you tell me what are the pictures which you saw here which were not shown in England?

A. I could not tell you offhand.

Q. Could you say definitely that things are shown here which are not shown in the west?

A. Well, you will find that scenes that are shown here are deleted from pictures at home.

Mr. Green: Have you any definite proof of it?

A. No. And you will find the same thing—for instance the things that are shown in France deleted in the pictures shown here. You have a different censor.

Chairman: That is a different thing. What is deleted here is by the board of censors. But we are more concerned with what is allowed by the censors. On what do you base that impression, which you have just told us of, that scenes which are deleted in England are shown here?

A. Well, from what I recall from memory. What I have seen in England and here. I didn't note it down specially at the time.

Q. But at least you could recall one thing to mind. You say—in fact it has been stated before, I have seen it stated both in the press and elsewhere that films are specially manufactured for exhibition in India.

A. Yes.

Q. You believe that. Can you tell us why that is?

A. I am afraid I can't. I am not interested in the production.

Q. I quite see that, but one would like to know. There are many things which have been stated but which, as men of prudence, we have to receive with caution. You have taken an interest in this. Surely there must be some cause why films are produced specially for consumption in India?

A. I couldn't give you an answer.

Q. Yet, you believe it. And why you believe it you cannot tell us. Now do you think that the uninformed Indian is affected by seeing the revues and other things which are staged in Bombay actually?

A. Very few Indians attend them.

Q. But I suppose they will be affected in the same way by seeing them?

A. But the actual plays never go so far as the pictures.

Q. I had in mind the chorus girls that appear in revues. Aren't they the same as are shown on the screen?

A. Oh no, vastly different.

Q. What do you think of the chorus girls who appear on the stage in flesh and blood. What impression do you think the Indian gathers from them?

A. From what I found he has those set aside in a class of their own. He does not take them as typical of European women as a class.

Q. He would not. And supposing he sees—I am speaking of the uninformed Indian—supposing he sees pictures in the "Tatler" or the "Times of India" for the matter of that, where ladies are allowed to be photographed in their bathing costumes, what do you think the uninformed Indian thinks of the westerner from seeing that? Do you think he gathers any wrong impression from that?

A. No. He does not see them.

Q. Do you think he gathers any wrong impression from what he sees of the modern dress of western ladies?

A. No.

Q. Then what is it which makes the difference on the screen?—which you think makes these uninformed Indians draw that impression?

A. Well, the general action right through the scene.

Q. The general tone, not of anything particularly depicted on the screen which is different from what he sees if he saw the people in actual life, not from their dress?

A. No.

Q. Not from any kissing?

A. No.

Q. And from their kissing and from their embracing . . .

A. Embraces, yes. That is action again. Whenever you come to action.

Q. May I put it to you, Major Jones, do you think that when an uninformed Indian saw a dancing party in a dancing hall in Bombay or in a night club, he would gather the impression that westerners are like that?

A. I am afraid he does.

Q. You think he would?

A. Yes.

Q. So you would ban dancing halls then?

A. No.

Q. Would you go to that extent? No doubt there is a great difference in that. Only a few uninformed Indians see those dancing halls, whereas on the screen there is a chance of a larger population seeing.

A. Yes. Those who see them in the dancing halls are very limited, and they probably see it time after time so that they . . .

Q. So that they get accustomed to it.

A. Yes, and they understand that there are other people who do not do these things.

Q. There is the psychological effect of getting familiar with things. I admit that. I suppose an uninformed Indian is shrewd enough to know that a drama or a stage or screen is not actual life.

A. It is very difficult to say.

Q. Of course, they are accustomed to dramas. They see their own dramas.

A. But they have their own standard for their players.

Q. Do you think if he sees an Indian drama staged or an Indian film staged do you think that he gathers the impression that it is the ordinary life of the Indian?

A. But the majority of their films are historical.

Q. Take, for instance, the film "Sacrifice". Have you seen it?

A. I do not know whether I have seen that one, but I have seen a good many of them.

Q. Some of them depict social life, girls smoking cigarettes, and boys and girls embracing. Do you think that he takes it as typical of Indian life?

A. No.

Q. So that an uninformed Indian is capable at any rate of knowing that the stage is not real life?

A. Yes.

Q. I suppose he has got that capacity and you give him that capacity?

A. Yes.

Q. I suppose you are not for banning such films altogether?

A. All such scenes.

Q. Have you seen the film which was shown last night, "The Lady of the Harem"?

A. No.

Q. When I saw it last night, I was thinking about it from the point of view of the uninformed Indian. It was intended to depict life not in Europe or in America, but elsewhere. But still Englishmen took part in it and American men and women took part in it. Do you think he will gather the impression that the westerner lives the life of the Padsha which is shown on that screen?

A. To a certain extent.

Q. Then you would not allow a westerner to act that part?

A. Yes.

Q. I find there girls being carried away almost in a nude fashion with clothing which merely serves as an apology. But the actresses in that play are white girls. Do you think that that would have any effect on an uninformed Indian, that he would draw the inference that the westerner leads that life, when he knows that it depicts some other part of the world.

A. He would have the idea that there is not any very great amount of modesty among the women of the west to play such rôles.

Q. He will draw that inference from what he sees in actual life in certain things which he would not appreciate but which you and I would appreciate.

A. An uninformed Indian very rarely sees all those things you are referring to.

Q. That brings me to another point. We are told, and there is no reason to doubt it, that the Indian sees the Indian films much more than western films

however loose the latter may be. He does not care for the looseness of the picture, and however crude the Indian picture may be, he is satisfied with it.

A. Yes.

Q. And in fact, Indian pictures are getting more and more popular with them, so that would it not be an exaggeration to attach too great importance to the impression which is sought to be conveyed to the uninformed Indian?

A. No.

Q. You would not think it is an exaggeration?

A. No.

Q. You think it is an evil which has to be tackled?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you conversed with any uneducated Indian on this matter?

A. No.

Q. Or with any educated Indian on this matter?

A. Yes.

Q. Educated Indians in the Bombay city?

A. Yes.

Q. Do they have the same impression that you have as regards that?

A. Yes.

Q. They would like to see it themselves?

A. Yes.

Q. But they would prohibit it to the uninformed Indian?

A. They want to ban it.

Q. They want to ban it for themselves?

A. Yes.

Q. It is not a matter for the uninformed Indian?

A. It is the general feeling.

Q. You would ban them altogether? You would not have a different standard of censorship between the informed Indian and the uninformed Indian, or between the European audience and the Indian audience?

A. No.

Q. You want a uniform standard?

A. Yes.

Q. Would you make a difference in the standard of censorship between the city and the districts?

A. No.

Q. You think the standard of censorship in this case should be more strict than in England?

A. Yes.

Q. Whether to the European or to the Indian? Now, I come to answer 24 (d) where you say, "I have seen several pictures in which women were clearly depicted as kept women, and a picture some time ago produced in Calcutta portrayed a woman as a mistress of a Bengali man." Do you mean to say that there should be no play or drama or story in which kept women should be referred to?

A. What I really intended to convey was that as far as possible they should be of the same race. If the film was produced by the Indian it should be all Indians. If they are produced by Englishmen they should be all Englishmen. If they are produced by Madrasis they should all be Madrasis. There should be only one race engaged in it, I mean the actors and actresses of films.

Q. It is rather a large order, unless you have any particular reference to any particular personal matter?

A. I gave you one particular film in which . . .

*Q.* You say a female character was taken by an Englishwoman in life?

*A.* Yes. The film was produced in Calcutta. It was a local product.

*Mr. Green:* Do you say that she was represented on the screen as an Englishwoman?

*A.* No.

*Q.* As a Bengali herself?

*A.* Yes. She was represented as an outside woman altogether.

*Q.* She was dressed as a Bengali?

*A.* No. She was dressed as an ordinary outside Indian woman.

*Chairman:* She was dressed as an Indian?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* She was not represented as a European?

*A.* No.

*Q.* She consented to take that part. She was not represented as an Englishwoman?

*A.* I have objection to showing to the general public a film of that nature.

*Q.* If she was represented as an Indian what is your objection? I thought it comes within your meaning that they should have the same race. You would bar English actresses taking the part of Indian girls?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Supposing they form a large corporation here and get out good English actresses who can act for the screen, and make her take the part of Sita who is considered as the goddess of virtue among us, you would not approve of it?

*A.* No.

*Q.* On what ground would you ban it?

*A.* On the same ground as I would protest against a Madrasi woman being employed with a Bengali man. I think the people of the race would object. They do object. We know in India they object very strongly to their women acting with men of other races.

*Q.* If an English company came out and started a film producing industry in which they employ both English and Indian talent . . .

*A.* No. Then I object.

*Q.* Do you think that that objection will be shared by many people in your community?

*A.* I think it is shared by a very great many.

*Q.* I am sorry to hear it, because it means a blow to the industry. We are thinking of some combined effort to start the Indian industry here in the country. If your race is going to object to that, I am afraid it will be a serious blow.

*A.* Indians object to it very strongly and we object on the same basis.

*Q.* You would also object to an Indian taking the part of a European?

*A.* Yes, because he will not be able to depict it properly.

*Q.* Do you object to Frenchmen taking the part of Englishmen on the stage?

*A.* We are of the western race. The Bengalis, the Madrasis and the Rajputs think themselves separately.

*Q.* Why in India alone would you differentiate between a Bengali and a Madrassi?

*A.* Because they are different, and I do not think a Rajput or a Madrassi can depict a Bengali any more than a Bengali can depict an Englishman. You will get a caricature.

*Q.* I am sure an educated Indian lady can take the part of an English lady with charm . . .

*A.* I am afraid I have not seen one yet.

*Q.* I have seen many, I won't say many, but some English ladies who dressed in Indian costume have appeared to us really as Indians, so much so

that sometimes we mistake them for Indians. Any way that is your point of view?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think that point of view is shared by many Europeans in this country? It is an agonising fact to me.

A. Yes. It is shared.

Q. So the remedy for this is stricter censorship?

A. Yes.

Q. Are you satisfied with the present machinery of censorship?

A. No.

Q. You would have each film examined by more than one member of the Board?

A. Yes.

Q. You prefer that to the present practice?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think that will be enough to cure the difficulty you have in your mind, if you provide that each film should be inspected by more than one member of the Board?

A. I have suggested in my notes that there should be a panel.

Q. In the panel you propose that there should be four Europeans and other communities also should be represented. It is a very reasonable proposal. My only point is whether you insist on every film not being passed without being pre-viewed by more than one member of the Board?

A. Yes.

Q. From out of this panel they should select two men to see the film?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think a sufficient number of men with the required spirit and qualifications and willing to devote the time, will be forthcoming from all communities? You do not think there will be any difficulty about that?

A. No.

Q. What is your object in proposing that all film producing agencies should be registered and licensed? Would you apply that rule to all places of business or only to the film producing agencies? Don't you think that it will interfere with the development of trade?

A. No.

Q. Would you say that all places of business in the city should be registered and licensed?

A. We are more or less registered with the income-tax people. It is merely the same process.

Q. What is your object in requiring that they should be registered and licensed?

A. Registration and license are automatic, that is one process really. It will prevent people from exploiting labour and not paying them later when they could not pay their way. It will prevent also the putting up of films which are objectionable. Why should the work of the Censor Committee be taken up with film producers who cannot produce films which would pass.

Q. Have you got it in England?

A. No.

Q. Have you got it in any other country in the world? Why in India alone? It will interfere with the freedom of trade?

A. I do not think so.

Q. What is your object? Your object is to prevent people from being starved, that is, the labourers, and secondly, that improper films should not be produced?

A. Yes.

**Q.** I suppose you do not think that censorship of the films for public exhibition is enough? You know that the Indian produced films are censored before they are exhibited?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And if you censor them in the same way in which the foreign films are censored, in the way in which you have in mind, with the machinery which you have in mind, you do not think that is sufficient?

**A.** What penalty is there going to be? There is no penalty.

**Q.** A man would not waste his money in producing a film which is likely to be banned? It is a costly thing to produce a film and it is not a thing which you could put to any other use?

**A.** We do get films that can never stand . . .

**Q.** Can you mention any film?

**A.** What I say is why should the work of the censors in the different places be taken up in seeing films from a company which time after time it finds necessary to censor?

**Q.** Have you come across such instances?

**A.** I am not on the Board of Censors. That is for the Censorship Board to say.

**Q.** You do not base it on any actual experience?

**A.** No.

**Q.** You merely throw it out as a suggestion?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And I have pointed out to you the difficulties which may beset the trade if you adopt such a course. I suppose you believe in trade secrets?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** If you allow a place to be registered and licensed and liable to inspection and all that, what is there to prevent leakage of scenario writer's plot or the story writer's plot and another company may take undue advantage of it?

**A.** There is no inspection there and the registration is merely a small thing. These producing agents in England and America do amalgamate together. It will merely be the taking of the certificate to produce films, and there the matter ends.

**Q.** You have got the Factory Act, the Electricity Act and they entail a certain amount of precaution in that respect and you have got the Police Act giving powers to the police. If it was believed that the place was used for producing obscene things, the police would have a right to interfere?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Do you think any further power is needed?

**A.** No. If you have this registered you will merely have a register of the film producing people. At present you have no register and naturally the police or the proper authority will have to go on looking out for these people.

**Q.** The police have no complaint that they find any difficulty in finding out the places of production.

**A.** It is not a question of finding the places of production but a question of who is producing.

**Mr. Green :** I am myself interested more in the censorship part of the questions. Before I come to that, there are one or two general questions that I want to ask you. Do I understand you to object to a European actress appearing in an Indian film even if she acted so well that she would not be recognised on the screen as a European?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You would even object to that?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** On that point I have no further questions to ask. The general objection against the generality of films is that, owing to exaggeration and over-



emphasis of certain aspects of life, they are not really suitable to be seen by any decent minded person of any race, European or Indian.

A. Yes.

Q. Your remedy is to kill that trade only by drastic censorship?

A. Yes.

Q. At any cost?

A. Yes.

Q. The same would apply to British films and American films?

A. Yes.

Q. You have told the President that you understood that certain films had been passed by the censors in India which had not been passed in England?

A. No, certain scenes.

Q. Would you give us any definite example of that?

A. I would not like to say definitely now.

Q. Are you aware that the Indian Censorship Board has excised portions of films passed by the British Board?

A. Yes.

Q. I can assure you that they have. Are you aware that at any rate one British film has been banned in its entirety?

A. Quite possible.

Q. Your suggestion is not that the Indian Board is less conscientious than the British Board?

A. I do not suggest that.

Q. You believed that certain films were actually produced for India?

A. Yes.

Q. Are you aware how many theatres there are in India?

A. About 350?

Q. When I say India I mean, east of the Suez. Has to your knowledge any such film been exhibited in India?

A. I could not tell you. I am giving you that from hearsay.

Q. About censorship now, you have mentioned a specific film which you objected to, which you saw about six months ago. Did you communicate with any authority on that subject?

A. No.

Q. Did it not occur to you to approach the Commissioner of Police or the Board of Censors?

A. It was such poor stuff that the majority of people complained about it and the thing went out.

Q. Whether it was a good film which was unsuitable or whether it was a poor film which was unsuitable, would it not have been wiser to bring to the notice of the authorities constituted for that purpose that an undesirable film was shown?

A. I did mention it to one of the members of the Board over that particular scene. Whether they took any action I do not know. I did not mention it in writing. I said: "This is the stuff which you are passing."

Q. About the actual method of censorship. You suggest in your answer to questions 32 and 34 taken together, that different provinces should have their own censorship board?

A. Yes.

Q. And that the certificates should run for the particular province only?

A. Yes.

Q. You know that at present the Bombay Board issues a certificate which is accepted all over India subject to the right of the local authorities to suspend a film whenever they think fit and to report it to the Local Government?

A. Yes.

Q. Under your system of limited certificates it would mean that each film would have to be censored when it left one province and entered another?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think that that is an expense which could be met by the trade? At present the trade pays Rs. 5 for each 1,000 feet examined.

A. Yes.

Q. There are about 10 provinces in India. Then the trade would have to pay Rs. 50.

A. You can reduce it then.

Q. Do you think that Rs. 50 would be too much?

A. Yes.

Q. What is the method you suggest to reduce it? The Board of Censors has to have its expenses paid. Do you think that it should be paid by the general revenues?

A. Yes.

Q. At present the theory is that it should be paid by the fees charged to the trade.

A. It should be from the general revenues.

Q. At any cost the Government should supply sufficient funds to run the Board?

A. Yes.

Q. The Board should consist, you say, of "a salaried wholetime official as Chairman and of at least 15 members, 4 Europeans and the remainder of such races as are representative of the District in which the film is passed for exhibition." By district you mean province?

A. Yes, province.

Q. The actual amount of film passed last year in Bombay amounted to 3½ million feet. It takes about a hour to examine 4,000 feet and it works out actually at 3½ hours work a day. You want every film to be seen by a panel from your Board of 2 or more members?

A. Yes.

Q. Would you be content with two?

A. Yes. I said three I think.

Q. This is work that has got to be done throughout the year, I mean if people go away for week end they will have to be replaced. Now, with the increased amount of work which is likely to come as the industry progresses . . .

A. I think that with a committee of 15 it could be done. The only man who is going to give wholetime service is the Chairman.

Q. Is he personally to inspect every film for the Board?

A. Yes. He has to do nothing else.

Q. He is to do nothing else except see the films?

A. Yes.

Q. I will confine my question to the European community. You do not consider it difficult to get 4 European gentlemen of sufficient leisure for this form of public work, who will have to be available, practically speaking, whenever required say, every other or second or third day, to do 5 or 4 hours work inspecting films?

A. One every four days? I think you could get several people.

Q. As voluntary workers?

A. Yes.

Q. You do not think the gentlemen who have got the necessary position and education would prefer some other sphere of activity more to their liking, like the Legislative Council?

A. But I think you could find such men.

Q. Who would like to serve as censors more than on the Legislative Council?

A. That is entirely a different thing. This would be done some time in the day. I think it would be possible to find both Indians and Europeans who would do this.

Q. Are you an Honorary Magistrate?

A. No.

Q. Is it not very difficult for gentlemen to find time to do 2 or 3 hours work once a month?

A. I know it is difficult, but I think you could find suitable people.

Col. Crawford : Major Ellis Jones, I rather gather from your answers so far given that you consider that a fair proportion of the Western films shown to-day exhibit scenes entirely unnecessary to the story brought in by the producer merely to pander to the lower tastes of his audiences?

A. Yes.

Q. And you consider that is harmful no matter to whom you show it.

A. Yes.

Q. And you would like a stricter censorship on that?

A. Yes.

Q. Can you give me any idea of the particular type of scenes which you think are unduly exploited at present?

A. Cabaret and drinking scenes generally.

Q. Scenes of debauchery and orgies. Do you think scenes of seduction are shown too much, the seduction of girls I mean?

A. I have not seen very many of those.

Q. You would more or less class it among the cabaret scenes?

Chairman : I am afraid I must betray my ignorance. I want to understand what are cabaret scenes?

A. Generally loose dancing.

Col. Crawford : Do you think that there is a tendency in some of the close up kissing pictures for the kiss to develop unduly sensually.

A. I do not think so.

Q. Well now, when I get to your answer to 24 (d), you say the female character was done by an Englishwoman. What evidence have you for that? I want to know whether you gathered it actually from the picture itself, because you are no doubt aware that even Indian actresses cover themselves with white make-up.

A. No, personal knowledge.

Q. You have made some amazing statements but I take it that what you really want to say is that you think there is considerable objection on the part of all races to having their womenfolk shown in close sexual contact with men of other races. That is what you want to say?

A. Yes.

Q. Now when you come down to your Board of Censors you suggest a Board of at least 15 members, four of whom are to be Europeans and the remainder representatives of the districts through which the film would pass. How would you get that? By Government nomination?

A. Government nomination every time.

Q. Now you mention the fact that you have been in a good many mofussil cinemas.

A. Yes.

Q. Can you tell us whether the class of pictures shown in the mofussil is of a different type to the films shown in the Fort here.

A. The only thing about them is they are worn out. They are first shown in the cities after which they go to the mofussil.

Q. I am a bit interested in that. We have had witnesses who suggested that these worn films are very damaging to the sight of audiences and it might be desirable to take steps to prevent films being shown which are too worn. Now, from your experience of mofussil cinemas do you think some steps in that direction are desirable?

A. That is a question about which they have complained at home, that worn films are bad for the eyes. I cannot tell you from my own experience. I can tell you that the films are worn.

Q. And flickering generally?

A. Yes.

Q. You gave us the impression that certain scenes in films are shown out here which are not shown in England and you suggest that films were definitely produced for India. Might I ask you if you have noticed films shown recently in Bombay in which the fashions were 10 or 15 years old.

A. That we have from time to time.

Q. Does not that suggest to you what is actually happening?

A. What I think takes place is that those are films that they piece together from older films. They are not original films.

Q. Instead of showing up-to-date films they are to-day unloading on India their old films?

A. I would not say old; patchwork films.

Q. I mean films produced 10 years ago.

A. Scenes produced in that time.

Mr. Nogy: I think, Major Ellis Jones, you have been pretty long in this country—how many years?

A. 15 years.

Q. You are a Major in the Army?

A. In the Volunteers.

Q. Did you not go to the War?

A. No.

Q. Do you represent a European constituency in the Legislative Council.

A. No, Cotton.

Q. By cotton you mean?

A. The growing and the marketing of cotton.

Q. Have you come into contact with the Indian people to any very large extent?

A. Yes.

Q. What class of Indians?

A. All classes.

Q. What particular opportunities had you of studying the impression which films produce on the minds of the uncultured Indian, for instance.

A. Practically the whole of my association, 99 per cent. of it, is with Indians, and I gathered my impression from general discussions with them.

Q. With your workmen?

A. With all sorts of people generally.

Q. Now have you come across very many Rajputs or Madrassis or Bengalis in the course of your experience?

A. Yes.

Q. You have talked with them on this point?

A. Yes.

Q. When you say that if Rajputs were made to represent Bengalis and Madrassis or vice versa, objection would be taken by these different com-

munities, you have the support of the Rajputs, Madrassis and Bengalis, I take it?

A. I am just giving you the general purport of their ideas.

Q. Coming to clause (d) of your answer to question 24, I find that your objection related to a particular scene and that when attention was drawn to the scene to which you refer it was further censored. Have you any recollection what that scene represented?

A. Love-making.

Q. That is all. Your objection therefore I take it was to the love-making and not so much to the representation of a particular character.

A. My objection was to the particular person taking that particular character.

Q. Did she appear in that particular scene alone or in other scenes?

A. Yes.

Q. What do you mean when you say "love-making."

A. That was the most objectionable thing.

Q. Supposing in an American film (and you do find America films of that kind) an Oriental potentate was represented by an American actor, and say a slave or a mistress of that Oriental potentate was represented by an American actress too. Would you object to that film being shown?

A. I think I said in an oral answer I object to these pictures.

Q. Simply because an American takes the part of an Oriental?

A. No, because it shows an entirely false standard.

Chairman: His objection is generally to any race representing another race.

Mr. Neogy: So your objection is to any sort of cooperation between different races in the film studio, in the production of any particular film?

A. Yes.

Q. And I take it supposing Indians were employed in England for the purpose of producing some Indian characters in a British film you would object to that?

A. If they were playing against other people. In other words, if one scene depicted the action taking place between different people I would object.

Q. You would object to an Indian actor and an European actor coming together in any scene.

A. If they are playing against each other. That is the technical expression if you and I are acting together. Of course there are scenes where there is no acting. If you and I were photographed sitting round this table that wouldn't be playing against each other, and that does not matter.

Q. What specific proposal have you to make to the Committee in order to make this impossible in India?

A. It can only be done by the Board of Censors.

Q. That is to say, it should be laid down as a sort of statutory rule.

A. If you lay it down as a statutory rule it won't do. It must be left to your Board of Censors to decide whether these people are playing against each other, or not.

Q. And you object to any such thing happening in actual life too.

A. It does take place in actual life and it is no good my sitting down and objecting.

Chairman: Supposing some man wants to expose the evils of mixed marriages, how would you provide for such a case, whether by way of drama or otherwise?

A. That is a purely private question. That affects individuals; we are now dealing with generalities.

**Q.** When you say you represent a very large section of European opinion what is your justification in making that statement? Have you any definite instructions from any particular association to make that statement?

**A.** No.

**Q.** It is his impression. I only wanted impressions.

**Mr. Coatsman:** I would just like to make my own mind absolutely clear about your views on this subject of mixed acting. Your objections are not based on merely artistic grounds.

**A.** Oh no.

**Q.** From your first remarks on the subject I thought they were met. This picture you refer to was in Calcutta, a woman personating the mistress of a Bengali man: did you see that?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Have you seen any other films in which, shall we say, an Englishwoman has been acting with Indians?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Now can you dissociate the subject of this particular film in Bengal from the question of mixed acting for the moment. Would you have any objection to English actresses acting with Indian men in films which do not touch on the sexual relation.

**A.** If they do not come into sexual relation I should not mind but then they would not be acting so much against each other.

**Q.** Only this morning, it might interest you, we have seen a film in which the actors and actresses were of three and, I think, possibly four different races, not communities; and I may tell you it is one of the best films I have ever seen. I wanted to be quite sure that that was your point. Now the reason I wanted to be quite sure is that you have no objection to the association of actors of different races. As you know one of the great hindrances to the development of the film industry in this country is the lack of capital; also what one might call the drawbacks in some directions in the way of the highest technique. Now it has been suggested, not only before this Committee but in the press and so on, that an excellent way of overcoming both the reluctance of capital to enter the Indian cinema industry and also the drawback in the technique of the industry in this country would be for Western producers and financiers and particularly English, in view of the unique relations existing between England and India, would be for these Western producers and financiers to enter into business relations with Indians here, Indian financiers, producers and so on and with one or more combines in this country so as to bring into the Indian industry both the capital required and the skill required. Now you would have no objection if, say, an English financial group decided to enter into business relations with Indians in the film industry: you would have no objection then if English actors and actresses were to associate with Indians?

**A.** I do not think it would help the films at all.

**Q.** But don't you think such association may be necessary.

**A.** No, and you will always have this problem against you. One must bear in mind that the Indian stage and the European stage are not on the same level. You must first bring your Indian stage up to the European standard. Then you will have the right to ask for association. Otherwise you are going too fast.

**Q.** Let me explain what I mean. You are agreed that the subjects and the treatment of Western films are not altogether suitable to India.

**A.** No.

**Q.** Have you seen many Indian films produced in India?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** How many are copies of the Western type of film, particularly the American type of film?

A. I am afraid those I have seen have been principally historical films and not copies of anything. They were first class things.

Q. They have been specific in atmosphere and treatment?

A. Yes.

Q. Well, from evidence we have had already we gather that those films are popular and that they do meet the needs of Indian audiences. So I think we can take it the Indian film industry will tend to develop its own technique rather than copy the West. Even now have you any objection to such association of English actresses and actors with Indians?

A. I still maintain the same position. I do not think they should act, as I say, against each other.

Q. Have you seen the film "Sacrifice"? Because as I watched that film this morning I was very greatly struck by the restraint of the acting. I saw some Indian films here last year and I noticed the same thing then. The actors and actresses in an Indian film do not go in for violent kissing and promiscuous hugging that you and I and others object to. So I ask, are not you prepared to think that the more objectionable features of the Western film are not likely to be reproduced in this country even in love scenes?

A. I do not think so. I think you will tend that way. The difficulty will arise. It depends entirely on your producer what effects you get. If you take away from the producer the materials, he cannot do it. You see you have got two entirely different standards and until the Indian standard approximates more to the Western standard I maintain you have no right to introduce this state of affairs.

Q. How is it to approximate without such connection?

A. With its own people.

Q. Don't you think the process will be rather a long one?

A. If you have a Western film with Indians in it they are generally put in a subordinate position. That is just as wrong as putting a European in these other films.

Q. Well now, have you seen many English films exhibited in this country?

A. I am afraid not. There have been one or two that have come out here; those I have seen.

Q. What do you think of them?

A. During the last 3 or 4 years they have improved; before that they were poorly produced.

Q. Have you seen them exhibited in Bombay?

A. Yes.

Q. To good houses? Both Indians and Europeans?

A. Yes. A good film will always produce a good house.

Q. Well, lately do you think the audiences have been satisfied with English films.

A. No, I don't think they have been satisfied with many.

Q. Because the taste is generally towards Indian films?

A. Yes.

Q. You would like to see more English films?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you been following the discussions in Parliament?

A. Yes.

Q. What do you think of the possibility of a quota system in this country? For Indian films for the moment what are the possibilities?

A. I think there are big possibilities for the film. The film business has only just started in India.

Q. You think the quota system will have to come.

A. Yes.

Q. The Resolution of the Imperial Economic Conference on this subject has come to your notice?

A. Yes, I think it is sound.

Q. Would you like Indian films to circulate in England and the rest of the Empire?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you seen any Indian films which you think would be popular in England or in any other part of the Empire?

A. I think several historical pictures would be popular.

Q. Would you like to see more?

A. Yes.

Q. And you would like to see more Empire films circulated in this country?

A. Yes.

Q. What would be your main object?

A. Provided we produce a picture that is sound I think we should keep within the family. And your Indian films should go home.

Q. Well that is your reason. You would welcome a reciprocal arrangement between all parts of the Empire for the purpose of film exhibition?

A. Yes I think that would be in the interests of the Empire.

Q. But it would have to be on a basis of absolute reciprocity?

A. Well, I don't think that is necessary. It is advisable but it is not necessary. Films could be exchanged without being reciprocal. Reciprocity is not absolutely essential to success. We may have good films from South Africa or Australia; and to say "We won't take yours if you do not take ours" would be foolish.

Q. You are looking at it purely from the commercial point of view?

A. I am looking from the general broad point of view. It is in the interests of the people here that we should not shut out people because they don't want to see ours.

Q. But would you admit that an agreement on the basis of reciprocity would stimulate the circulation of Empire films throughout the Empire?

A. Yes, it is advisable but I say it is not necessary.

Mr. Neoph: I find that in your written answer you state "I have no views on questions under part I". I may tell you that the questions relating to a reciprocity system for films of the British Commonwealth are included in Part I. Now in reply to questions put by my friend on my left (Mr. Coatsman) you have given some very definite opinions on the subject. Since when have you come to have those views?

A. I had them; but I have got no views to submit in writing to you. That is all.

Col. Crawford: What are your general views on the question of Imperial Preference as regards India?

A. I believe in Empire Preference as regards India generally.

Q. With no limitations at all.

A. None.

Sir Haroon Jaffer: Could you kindly define what is a suitable picture for public exhibition?

A. I could give you the names of some pictures. "The Black Pirate." Then you have historical pictures like "Rupert of Hentzau" which come from home.

Q. You think it would bring about a fall in the box office receipts?

A. No, you will generally find that when pictures like "Scaramouche" come on the box office receipts increase.



Q. Now you say there should be four Europeans on your Board. Why four Europeans?

A. In order to secure their attendance each time the Board meets.

Q. You won't mind having representatives of the trade, producers and exhibitors and also ladies on your Board?

A. No.

Q. You would have exhibitors on the Board of Censors?

A. I do not mind who is on the Board because you have got a check on the lines I have indicated.

Q. You would not like them to be elected by different bodies such as Chambers of Commerce, legislative bodies and so on?

A. No.

Q. Not elected but nominated?

A. Yes.

Q. By the trade.

A. No, by Government.

Q. Government should nominate a representative of the trade?

A. Yes.

### Written Statement of Mr. ARDESHIR BILIMORIA, Director, Madan Theatres, Ltd. (Bombay Circle).

#### INTRODUCTORY.

1. I am connected with the Cinematograph Industry in India from 1909 in Bombay; since then I have a hand in the management of the Excelsior Cinema, Empire Cinema, Empress Cinema and lately the Edward Cinema.

#### GENERAL.

2. (a) In the Excelsior and Empire Cinemas which are situated in the Fort locality of Bombay, we generally cater for the European and educated Indians.

(b) The Cinema audience in these theatres is composed of half Europeans and the other half educated Indians.

(c) About 10 to 15 per cent.

The Empress Theatre which is under our control also, is mostly patronised by educated Indians and a few Europeans.

#### PART I.

##### *Film Industry in India.*

3. European and American films are the most popular with Indian audiences of the class for whom we cater, i.e., the educated Indians.

4. The answer is in the affirmative.

5. Yes, and they are very popular with the masses and uneducated people.

Generally the Indian produced films draw more audiences than a Western film; as for instance (1) Patibhakti; (2) Nala Damayanti; (3) Toorkey Hoor; (4) Harischandra; (5) Krishna Kanta's Will and (6) Jaidev.

6. Films of Indian life and those taken from Indian mythology and history are more popular at present with the Indian mass audiences and uneducated persons than Western films.

7. The educated Indians prefer Western films to Indian made films because the Indian made films are not taken with that amount of care and technique that are devoted to them in the West. There have been very

few films made in India that would appeal to the educated classes. To the illiterate population their own mythology would appeal most.

7. Up to now there has been no difficulty in obtaining suitable films for exhibition to the British and Indian Troops.

8. (a) The answer is in the affirmative.

9. Yes, good films are readily obtainable at reasonable prices.

10. The system of "block" and "blind" booking do not exist in India.

11. Exhibitors have sufficient facilities for previewing films in India.

12. The Amusement Tax is a great handicap to the industry. Many Cinema Theatres have reduced their prices of admission by half because their patrons would not pay the extra amount of tax levied on admission and many of them have included the tax in their original prices. Thus really speaking the tax goes out of the exhibitors and not from the public.

13. The Customs Tariff on raw films and film producing machineries should be entirely removed to give an impetus to film producing industry in India.

14. The increased use of the Cinema for educational purposes in schools and for adult education in agriculture, public health, industries, etc., should be encouraged.

15. The Indian film producing industry should be allowed to take its own natural course of demand and supply without embarking at present on a large scale, otherwise there would be a reaction in favour of Western films.

16. At present there are very few Indian producers, directors, actors, actresses and scenario writers of sufficient technical knowledge on whom the country can depend for a large output of films of real competitive exhibition value in India or abroad.

17. Sufficient capital has been forthcoming for film production as per demand in proportion to the demand made on it.

18. The Government can render great help in the film producing industry by allowing the producers the use of historic places such as Forts, Palaces, etc., for taking films therein.

20. Any expenditure by Government is not justifiable having regard to the other needs of the country; it should be left to private agency.

21. There should be absolutely no State Agency employed to undertake the management of the Film Industry; and a monopoly of the censorship should not be allowed in a restricting sense to interfere with the development of film industry.

#### *Films of the British Commonwealth.*

22. As Indian films are in all cases inferior to European and American products in all their essentials at present, there is no room for reciprocity as Indian films will be totally rejected by other parts of the Empire.

While on the other hand British Producers are apparently not very keen for the Indian market. If up to date British producers who make good films have their agencies in India on the spot, there would be a bigger demand for British films than at present.

In pre-war times the London Film Company who had their Agency established in Bombay could very readily dispose of their goods, because they were of the best; e.g., (1) The House of Temperley, (2) The Prisoner of Zenda, (3) Rupert of Hentzau, (4) England's Menace.

But the present supply of British films is not up to the most advanced standard and the exhibitor is not encouraged to show them as there is a fall in the Box Office receipts.

23. Films can be used to a certain extent for making known the conditions, resources and habits of the people of the one part of the Empire to the other; but this can only be done by the Government of each country.

## PART II.

*Social Aspects and Control.*

24. (a) The films have a demoralising effect if they are not properly censored.

(b) There is no such general circulation of immoral or criminally suggestive films as they are not allowed to be shown to the public.

(d) The present censorship is quite adequate in cases of sex and crime films.

(e) It is not within my knowledge that there has been any increase of crime in the province due to the Cinema.

25. Special consideration in the censorship of films in this country is not necessary though the social customs and outlook are quite different between the West and the East.

26. (a) The amount of care at present bestowed in censoring films likely to offend religious susceptibilities is quite adequate.

27. (a) Films showing Western civilisation are not liable to be misunderstood by Indians whether educated or uneducated. If films depict the bad side of civilisation, they will know it is bad; if films depict the good side, they will know it is good. They are not liable to be misunderstood.

(b) Films misrepresenting Indian civilisation have not been known in India.

28. No such films as having bad effects on children and adolescents are allowed to be shown.

29. It should be left to the Censors to certify whether films are meant for adults only.

30. Children should not be prohibited from visiting cinemas in general as they are almost in all cases accompanied by their parents. If they are not accompanied by their parents, the censorship should be considered an adequate restriction for such cases.

31. The censorship of films is an effective method of guarding against misuse of the film.

32. The present system of censorship in Bombay is satisfactory.

33. An unreasonably strict censorship would not only interfere with the recreation of the public but would also adversely affect the business and would ultimately involve a falling off in the attendance of cinemas. It would also interfere with the natural development and growth of the industry.

34. (a) I am not in favour of replacing the present Provincial Boards of Censors by a single central board as it would cause immense inconvenience to the trade.

35. (a) The present constitution of the Provincial Boards is satisfactory but it could be improved upon. I would suggest the Board to be composed of the following:—

(1) The Commissioner of Police, (2) A representative of the Bombay Municipal Corporation, (3) A representative of the Bombay Chamber of Commerce, (4) A representative of the Indian Merchant Chamber, (5) A representative of the Bombay University, (6) A representative of the Trade from the producers, (7) A representative of the Trade from the importers, (8) A representative of the Trade from the exhibitors, (9), (10) and (11) Nomination by Government.

36. (a) The present system prevailing in Bombay and Calcutta under which films are ordinarily examined by Inspectors subordinate to the Board is satisfactory. The Inspectors should have University qualifications from their own local University.

(b) The system that all films to be examined by members of the Board will not be satisfactory nor will it be possible as such censorship will not be of any uniformity and same standard.

37. (a) There are at present adequate safeguards against objectionable films in each province as each province has an independent censoring board.

38. There have been instances of films which have been passed by a Board of Censors in one province and found objectionable in another province.

39. Not that I know of.

40. It is neither necessary nor advisable nor practicable to censor posters, handbills and advertisements of cinema films. The Press Act is quite adequate for this purpose.

41. The answer is in the affirmative.

42. The Board of Censorship should be more accessible to the Trades people, and if necessary, exhibitors should be asked to be present at the Board's meeting to explain their view of a certain film to which objection has been raised. Any defaults made in the observance of censorship rules should be met with by Departmental penalties and not by prosecution of the persons in a Criminal Court of Law. Appeal should be allowed to be made in a Civil Court of Law where differences of opinion exist.

43. A reasonable censorship is quite adequate.

44. It should be left to the Press.

45. (a) There should be no Government control over film production.

(b) It is not necessary to restrict and license film producing agencies as all films produced have got to be censored before exhibition.

#### *Observations.*

The Copyright Law in India should be applied in cases where copyright of films have been taken in countries of their origin. Such Copyright Laws should be made applicable not only to British India but also to the Indian Native States.

For the encouragement of British films, British producers should open out their own offices in India for putting their goods on the market and if the films are of any Box Office value there would be no hindrance to exhibitors showing the same.

It may be stated that the Madan Theatres, Ltd., has no monopoly as regards any films. It exhibits films, whether British, American or Indian, which have box office values. The Company is a public concern of limited liability, having for its shareholders Indians and Europeans. Out of a total of 350 Cinema Theatres in India, only 70 are under the Company's direct control and about 25 are being run in association.

#### **Oral Evidence of Mr. ARDESHIR BILIMORIA, Director, Madan Theatres, Ltd. (Bombay Circle), on Monday, the 14th November 1927.**

*Chairman:* Mr. Bilimoria, are you speaking on behalf of the Madan Theatres or are you speaking in your personal capacity?

A. I am speaking in my personal capacity, and also on behalf of Madans so far as their interests in Bombay are concerned.

Q. You are the representative of the Madan Theatres, Ltd., in Bombay, and I suppose you will prefer not to be examined on general questions affecting their business?

A. No. I have made out another further statement which I want to put in. (The statement was handed in to the committee).

Q. It is rather a pity that you should give this statement to us now. We should have had it before we had examined the members of that association?

A. I do not belong to that association. I should rather wish you to disabuse your minds.

Q. We want information. We are not much concerned with your local politics. We want information on the industry as a whole. We don't want to embark upon any mutual recrimination?

A. I am not here for that.

Q. You are directly connected with the cinema industry in India on the exhibition side, are you not?

A. Yes.

Q. You have not concerned yourself with any production?

A. No.

Q. Are you an importer yourself?

A. So far as Madans are importers.

Q. I suppose Madans have no producing companies in this presidency?

A. No. They produce films only in Bengal, and they have a studio there.

Q. Your experience is confined to cinemas in the Fort?

A. Yes, so far as the European locality is concerned.

Q. Have you any theatre in the Indian locality?

A. Yes. We have the Empress, and lately we have added another and that is the Edward. The Empress is already ours, we acquired it about 7 years ago, and the Edward we have just acquired on lease.

Q. I suppose that in none of them you exhibit local made films?

A. We do not exhibit Indian pictures.

Q. In all the theatres which you own or which you have rented, you exhibit only foreign films?

A. We don't exhibit even the films made by Madans, because they don't draw large audiences.

Q. Even in the Indian quarter they don't draw audiences?

A. We tried the experiment and failed very miserably.

Q. You yourself say that these Indian films are more popular at present with the Indian audience and uneducated people than Western films. How is it then that your own productions are not exhibited in your own theatres?

A. As I said, we took a trial and we had a very bad experience. It was a financial disaster in the Indian part of the town.

Q. When was that?

A. It was about 8 years ago, that we tried the film called "Nurjehan."

Q. Is it because it was inferior to the Indian production made in Bombay?

A. No, because some of Madans films have gone for 16 and 17 weeks in Calcutta.

Q. For how long did you try those films here, only once?

A. We gave a trial for four or five films, "Nurjehan," "Laila Majnu," "Ekadashi."

Q. May it be because your theatres are generally patronised by the Europeans and educated people?

A. Yes.

Q. Your audience generally consists of Europeans and probably the educated Indian public?

A. Yes, but although these films generally would appeal to them, somehow they suddenly left the show in the middle and went away.

Q. It is rather an interesting fact. Have you investigated the cause as to why the local productions are so popular with the Indian masses and that your own productions are not?

A. Our productions are very popular in Bengal, because we have made them according to the Bengali custom. If we show a Bengal production, people generally walk about and it does not appeal here.

Q. Did you try your productions in Madras? Have you any experience of Madras?

A. No.

Q. How many films have Madans produced so far?

A. I think they have produced about 50.

Q. Are they all paying in Bengal?

A. Yes, and some of the pictures that we have made appeal to people here in theatres which are not our own; we have to give our own films out on hire.

Q. To whom?

A. To the Crown, to the Globe or to the Imperial. If we have to show those films in Bombay, then we can't show them in our own theatres.

Q. Is it because of any agreement with any one that you can't show those pictures in your own theatres and that you have to go to outside theatres? Is it due to any economic cause or on account of any agreement with anybody?

A. There is no agreement with any one, but it is due to the local cause, that the theatres I have just mentioned are only patronised by people who always go and see Indian pictures. We think that some of our pictures do appeal to the Bombay audiences and we therefore rent them to some theatres here.

Q. Although you may have your own theatres in that locality?

A. Yes.

Q. Is it rather because your theatres have acquired a name for exhibiting only Western pictures?

A. Yes. As I said, we tried "Nurjehan" and "Laila Majnu," and our experience was that our audience fell even for a Western film after Indian film.

Q. Probably you do not want to injure your popularity with your clientele? You fear that you will injure the popularity of the theatres which are catering to a particular class of people?

A. Yes.

Q. That I can understand, perhaps you do not want to risk your reputation? Is it that the audiences in your theatre care only for Western films?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you try "The Light of Asia"? Even that failed to draw?

A. We showed it simultaneously with the Krishna Cinema and they made four times more business than we did with the same film in the same week.

Q. The audiences were different. You mean the educated Indian has acquired a taste for European films?

A. They want European drama. Not only that but the technique is superior.

Q. I know it is. But that an Indian film like "The Light of Asia" shouldn't attract an Indian audience?

A. It attracted our own audience—a made-up audience. It did not attract any outsider.

Q. But I mean is it any aversion to Indian shows, any pet aversion, or natural aversion, or acquired aversion?

A. We cannot say. People try to come and see but they cannot sit through the whole programme.

Q. The European and educated Indian want to see the drama of dancing.

A. Well, of course educated people want to see better films.

*Q.* And what do you mean by better films? Better finished?

*A.* Better finish, better technique, better in every way.

*Q.* You mean they want to see their own class of society. That is what it comes to. And for the same reason these Western films don't attract the uneducated or the masses of the people.

*A.* They used to but now it is going down and they are taking more to Indian pictures.

*Q.* And there is a very strong tendency on the part of the uneducated class—or I won't say the uneducated class but the classes which are not westernised—among them the Indian pictures are becoming more popular?

*A.* So much so that, in 1918, if I remember aright, there was only one theatre in Bombay which used to show Indian produced films and that was the Majestic, when they could not get as many pictures as they had to show; since then there are about a dozen theatres now that show exclusively Indian pictures.

*Q.* And that tendency is still upwards?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Do you think this so-called educated class which attends these Western shows, do they get affected in their tone of life?

*A.* I don't think so.

*Q.* I mean the youths, do they get impressed seeing more of the sex life on the screen?

*A.* I do not think so.

*Q.* I am glad to hear that. I thought they were more affected than the uneducated.

*A.* No, I don't think so.

*Q.* Do you think these Western films have any injurious effect upon the Indian public?

*A.* No.

*Q.* I mean in this way, especially in the case of the uninformed Indian as he is called, do you think that Western films have the effect of producing in his mind an impression that what he sees on the screen is the normal life of the westerner?

*A.* No, no. They know it is a picture and they don't think it represents the general life of the westerner.

*Q.* I suppose you come in contact with many people in Bombay?

*A.* Oh! yes.

*Q.* You don't think they gather any such impression or get affected in their estimation of the westerner?

*A.* No.

*Q.* He does not acquire a notion of contempt or disregard or disrespect for Western social life?

*A.* No.

*Q.* That is your considered view of the matter?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* I dare say you have heard allegations to the contrary. You don't think those allegations well founded?

*A.* They are not well founded and they are not true.

*Q.* You cannot say they are not true impressions. I myself am labouring under such an impression. You may call it wrong, but not untrue. They may be unfounded. But it is quite another thing to call them untrue. We get exaggerated notions of certain things.

*A.* Yes.

Q. I suppose you yourself have not taken any part or interest in the production of Indian films?

A. No, I have not.

Q. Of course, you don't know them—the producers, scenario writers or directors or actors?

A. I know them because we come across these people in business.

Q. You don't think the present class of people interested in the trade are sufficiently ambitious or sufficiently well-informed to develop the producing trade on the right lines?

A. They only look to the financial results. They do not look to the technical side of it.

Q. I don't think anybody does business without looking to the financial side of the thing.

A. No, but that is the sole and only aim with which they work.

Q. Well, every businessman does.

A. Yes, but he sets aside the technical side of the thing.

Q. Because it is too costly?

A. Yes.

Q. Now may I ask you—you have had considerable experience in this matter—foreign films are almost dirt cheap as compared with the cost of the Indian product? One picture might cost Rs. 10,000 and some pictures have cost even Rs. 80,000. Whereas foreign films you can get even well finished films—I won't say of the first class—at probably one-tenth that price.

A. Yes, but that is only a copy.

Q. That is what I mean. The public only want to see the picture—they don't care whether it is a first copy or a second copy.

A. Yes, but it must have cost a lot to the producer.

Q. Oh! yes, but in India it must have cost very little. So that it is not a paying proposition for the Indian producer.

A. I can't say that.

Q. Whereas you have to spend Rs. 20,000 on a picture here without the finish which you can get in a foreign film, you can get the foreign film at one-tenth that price. That is a fact, isn't it?

A. Yes.

Q. Now, do you think that something should be done to promote the indigenous industry in the country?

A. You see it does not require any government aid at present because it is already thriving.

Q. But it is not thriving on healthy lines.

A. It is not in a condition which requires any government help.

Q. Is it on the ground that it is not a vital industry that you object to government aid?

A. No, no. I don't say that but everybody who is making a picture makes money.

Q. But as you said he does not serve the public properly because of the fear of facing the heavy cost.

A. He does not serve the public properly because he does not know the art in its proper sense.

Q. And I suppose if he applies the art, it will add to the cost which is already heavy?

A. Yes.

Q. I see you have advocated the imposition of a duty on foreign films to make them more costly? Don't you advocate it?

A. No. I advocate the remission of the duty on raw films.



Q. That you do in order to encourage the growth of the Indian industry?

A. Yes.

Q. And do you also advocate the imposition of a heavy duty on second films from abroad?

A. It would be very difficult.

Q. I mean gradually,—I won't say at once,—in order to encourage the gradual growth of the Indian industry. Would you object to it?

A. I think the present rate of tariff duty is quite sufficient.

Q. Now I put it to you, Mr. Billimoria. It is not an accident that you are connected with the Indian film industry. The Indian industry is suffering from a heavy handicap in having to compete with foreign films which can be imported cheap.

A. I don't think it is a handicap, because if we take an instance, for each theatre they have to repeat every picture for three or four weeks because they cannot get a new production. But I would certainly advocate the remission of the duty on the raw products used and the cameras and printing machines.

Q. Now, you say the system of block and blind booking does not exist in India?

A. With the exception of one firm. We don't do it. But one firm,—if I am allowed to mention the name, the Universal,—have a system of block booking. For instance, if I am an exhibitor of the Universal, I am bound to take 52 programmes in the year. The exhibitor in India contracting with the Universal is bound to take 52 programmes or 104 programmes, whatever he requires, for the whole year; he is bound to take from the Universal and if he comes across a very good picture either from an Indian producer or anybody else, he has to make compensation to the Universal.

Mr. Green: He can only show Universal pictures unless he makes a special arrangement and pays compensation?

A. Yes.

Chairman: And does the exhibitor know beforehand what sort of films he is being asked to exhibit?

A. Well, the blind booking man does not know.

Q. Is that system in vogue?

A. Only so far as the Universal is concerned. But for instance Pathé—they don't do blind booking.

Q. Now, what do you do? Of course, you exhibit in your own theatres and you also hire out to other people who own theatres. You control certain theatres. What sort of arrangement do you enter into with those people? Do you not enter into blind booking with them?

A. They order what they want; otherwise they reject it even.

Q. You don't compel them?

A. No. There is one theatre in Bombay with whom we have got an arrangement to show our programme, but whenever he does not like our programme he rejects it or he takes it either from Pathé or from the Universal.

Q. He is under no obligation to take your programme? He takes what he likes—he has got freedom of choice?

A. Yes.

Q. We have heard it stated that this blind and block booking does not exist in reference to Indian films. There are so few of them that it is hardly likely.

A. No.

Q. What do you mean by saying in answer to 11 that exhibitors have sufficient facilities for previewing films in India.

A. Each importer has got his own agents.

Q. Here? Then what opportunity is there for previewing?

A. He does not enter into a contract here. The importer or the agent brings out films here or, as he likes or is supplied from home and the customer in India selects what he likes. He is bound to take what the film-man gives.

Q. Exhibited in that particular company?

A. Yes.

Q. To whom is the amusement tax a handicap?

A. To the exhibitor.

Q. Not to the importer?

A. Not to the importer unless he reduces his prices of films.

Q. Does he do that?

A. I don't know. But so far as our theatre is concerned we have reduced our prices in all our theatres since the tax was levied.

Q. Now do you advocate that certain facilities should be given producers in this country by Government apart from this reduction of duty, such as giving out troops and horses and forts, etc.?

A. I don't know about troops but I would certainly advocate giving facilities which the Government can easily place at our disposal, like forts or railways, or industries.

Q. You say here in answer to 22: "On the other hand British producers are apparently not very keen for the Indian market. If up to date British producers who make good films have their agencies in India on the spot, there would be a bigger demand for British films than at present." In the matter of the moral tone, is there much difference between a British film and any other foreign film?

A. There is not much difference.

Q. I mean scenes depicting cabaret life and the life of the underworld?

A. I have never seen the underworld life in the British film.

Q. The British pictures that you have seen don't show them. Then why do you say there is not much difference?

A. There is not much difference in the cabarets and other social dramas.

Q. There is not much difference between British and non-British foreign films?

A. No.

Q. Have you tried British films in your theatres?

A. Yes.

Q. Have they drawn?

A. Those that I have mentioned here. "The House of Temperley," "The Prisoner of Zenda," "Rupert of Hentzau" and "England's Menace" and some other films made by the same company. They were a great draw. But unfortunately this particular company ceased to exist as soon as the war came and their company also was closed down. They used to produce very good pictures.

Q. Is there any attempt on the part of the trade to prefer the films of any one country to another?

A. No. The exhibitor only sees to the picture which brings revenue.

Q. Has any foreign country any control over the exhibitors here so as to bring moral pressure—I don't say legal pressure—to bear upon them to exhibit only pictures of a certain country? I put it to you whether America has got a hold on the exhibitors in this country so as to compel the exhibitors to show only American pictures?

A. No. But with regard to this I would refer to my statement that up to date British producers making good films should have their agencies in

India. All the other producers from America have their men going about in India at one time or another.

Q. You mean they are pushing their business?

A. Agents or canvassers are always going about.

Q. Not only that but their finish is better. Is that so? Is the finish of the American film better than that of the British?

A. At present it is. Fifteen years ago it was not so.

Q. Of course they have stolen a march on other people who were sleeping.

Mr. Green: Who were fighting.

Q. Yes, true. I am sorry. Even after the fighting was over, I think they were more engaged in preparing war pictures. You advocate that some system may be devised by which Empire conditions may be made known to each other by means of the cinema?

A. Yes.

Q. I suppose you would couple it with some safeguards requiring protection for Indian films?

A. I don't know how to do it because our goods are so very inferior.

Q. Because otherwise we will never be able to make any headway.

A. We have tried it.

Q. I wonder why Madans have not tried it?

A. We have tried to send pictures to England and they didn't accept them because the history and mythology of this country are not known to them.

Q. But did you not try your pictures which you produced here which you considered good, which were received well in your theatres which Europeans frequent? Of course you never tried them in your own theatres.

A. No, we tried those that we thought might draw educated Indians.

Q. So that they did not attract the European here. Much less would they do so in England?

A. Yes.

Q. From your knowledge, do you think it is possible to produce films in India which will have an international value?

A. Not unless there are experts to do it.

Q. Have you got experts to do it? Can you do it? Why have Madans not done it?

A. First of all, Indian history is not taught in schools and colleges over there while we learn English history from the lowest standards. So we see a picture and immediately know what it refers to; whereas except for Clive and a few other people, very little is known in England about India.

Q. But can't the educated and cultured Indian produce pictures which will attract the foreign market?

A. It will take time.

Q. It is worth trying?

A. Yes.

Q. Would you be prepared to enter into a business arrangement of that sort—to get the best expert from outside and also get the best talent here?

A. That I would leave to my head office.

Q. Have you travelled in the West?

A. No.

Q. You are for classifying certain films as for adults only?

A. If the censors think it necessary.

Q. You would leave the liberty with them? I want to have your opinion on that point.

A. The present censorship is quite satisfactory.

**Q.** And if they class certain exhibits merely for adults, you have no objection?

**A.** It might draw more public.

**Q.** Do you think each film may be more satisfactorily examined if two or more members of the board examine it?

**A.** You mean the censorship?

**Q.** Yes. Before passing each film, it should be viewed by two or more members of the board.

**A.** I think the present system is very very satisfactory. I am satisfied with it.

**Q.** Have you any objection to the other course?

**A.** There won't be any uniformity in the standard of censorship.

**Q.** But on the other hand, there is the risk, when one man is doing it, of the censorship becoming blunt.

**A.** He will be more experienced and the public is there to protest.

**Q.** There has been no protest from the public in Bombay?

**A.** Not for my pictures—not for the pictures that I show.

**Mr. Coofman:** Your answer to question 12 about the amusement tax—you said of course it is a great handicap and you repeated it in answer to a question from the chair.

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Did you ever go into the matter scientifically. I take it, for example, in your business you have costing experts who go into the questions of cost in a really scientific manner. Did you ever consider this matter of the amusement tax in the same way?

**A.** I considered it in my own light, that it comes out of my pocket.

**Q.** But what I want to know is—I want to try and find out the exact incidence of the amusement tax because it may be a very serious handicap to a growing industry. What I want to know is did you ever go into the matter scientifically? Prepare data, examine your attendance and so on?

**A.** Yes, I have.

**Q.** Well, when the tax was first imposed in 1923 did you notice an immediate falling off for instance?

**A.** Yes. I will tell you what happened. Take for instance the Empress theatre. There the attendance which used to be about 2,000 a week immediately went down to 1,500 and 1,200, because the tax was added to it. After going into the figures of these attendances and prices I came to the conclusion that we should reduce the price and from Rs. 2 the highest and 4 annas the lowest, I reduced the price to from Rs. 1-2 the highest and 2 annas the lowest.

On four annas there is no tax. On eight annas there is one anna. Formerly that ticket used to be twelve annas or one rupee.

**Q.** When the amusement tax was first introduced, you just added the amount of the tax to the then existing prices of the tickets?

**A.** Yes

**Q.** And serious trouble occurred?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And then you reduced the prices?

**A.** Yes. May I give you an instance of to-day? The Italian Opera Company at the Excelsior Theatre are 52 strong. No foreign company can ever afford to come and play at Rs. 6. But we have had to put it down at Rs. 6 plus one rupee as tax. If you put it down at Rs. 7 the tax is Rs. 1-8-0 and people won't come. So we had to put the same price and to take out the tax of one rupee from our income.

**Q.** You reduced the prices?

A. Yes.

Q. Did the attendance respond to that reduction of the prices?

A. Yes.

Q. Did it go up?

A. Yes.

Q. To its previous level?

A. Not exactly to its previous level, but the receipts were say, about 15 or 12 per cent. less.

Q. Net after deducting the tax?

A. Yes. The gross receipts with the tax were practically the same or a little more.

Q. Since those days has there been any change in the size of your audience or the receipts and so on?

A. Yes.

Q. What I mean to say is, have you recovered from the first effects of the tax?

A. No. We never made up the deficit.

Q. You do not mean you are losing money?

A. We are losing that much money.

Q. You are not running your theatres at a loss all these years?

A. Some of them. We never paid any dividend for 6 or 7 years.

Q. Would it not be better to close them down?

A. Then what shall we do? In some provinces there is no tax. In Bengal.....

Q. You mean places where you have not got the tax?

A. In Bengal there was a tax, not on the theatres but on the cinemas. And they had to take it out because, if I may say, so, the Europeans made a clamour against it. The Empire Theatre there.....

Q. I do not want to waste your time and the time of the Committee on this. So, I will take it your evidence is that the industry, so far as you are concerned, has not yet recovered from the evil effects of the amusement tax?

A. No.

*Chairman:* I wish to inform the members of the Committee that I propose to omit the whole of paragraph 1 of the additional statement and so the members need not put questions on it.

*Mr. Coatsman:* In your reply to question No. 17 you say that sufficient capital has been forthcoming for film production and so on. What are your grounds for making that statement?

A. Because the Indian production has gone up by several hundred per cent. since 1918. In 1918 there was one theatre, now there are one dozen theatres.

Q. Which cater only for Indian films?

A. Yes. And there are studios to make those films.

Q. Taking for granted the preference of the Indian audience for Indian films, has there been such an expansion in the production of Indian films as there ought to have been?

A. Yes. According to the demand there has always been supply.

Q. And the supply is now adequate to the demand?

A. Yes.

Q. You think these travelling cinemas and cinemas in smaller places which show second or third or tenth run European films would not prefer Indian films if they could get them?

A. They would prefer, but they will not be able to pay the producer.

Q. You know the film producing companies in Bombay?

A. Yes.

Q. Are they reasonably stable? Or are they always appearing and disappearing?

A. Yes, four or five of them have disappeared.

Q. In what time?

A. Since 1918. The Majestic Film Company disappeared and there are three or four more.

Q. What do you think? The companies that have produced and are producing Indian films, are they stable as they ought to be, reasonably stable?

A. Reasonably stable.

Q. How have they been financed?

A. Private finance.

Q. Just as partners and the like?

A. Yes, as partners.

Q. Supposing that more money went into the industry, would that enable it to thrive and produce more films?

A. If there was more money they would spend it, but there must be some experienced people to handle the machine and the films.

Q. The present direction is not quite what it might be you think?

A. No.

Q. Would not better financing enable the producing companies to become stronger and bigger and get in experts from outside if necessary?

A. I do not think so. I think the finances are adequate.

Q. Do you think there would be any benefit to the industry if some of these producing companies were to amalgamate with each other; instead of having half a dozen small companies suppose you have a big company?

A. They would not produce the number of films which the trade would require.

Q. Why not?

A. Because it will be centralised again. All these studios have been springing up from one main spring. Formerly there was only one expert. His subordinates have now opened out their own studios and that is how the process goes on.

Q. Don't you think that in the film industry, like any other industry, amalgamation means greater resources, which means greater production?

A. I do not think so. It will be as poor as at present.

Q. You do not think a really rich producing company in this country by producing better and more films would create a greater demand in the country and increase its market?

A. No. Not at present.

Q. Question No. 22. Why do you say that there is no room for Indian films in other parts of the British Empire?

A. Because our films are very inferior and they would not accept them.

Q. Can you think of any Indian film which would have drawn in England or Australia or South Africa?

A. Except the topical films, no.

Q. Have you seen the film "Sacrifice"?

A. Yes.

Q. Don't you think that would draw?

A. But people must first understand the story, the story of "Sacrifice."

Q. Mr. Neogy told us that it deals with the history of Tipperah. I may have heard of Tipperah before this morning, but certainly I never knew of

its history. I do not know Tipperah and I could not tell you now where it is. Still I thoroughly appreciated that film.

A. There is only one such film.

Q. The point I want to make is, do you think that that film would draw in England?

A. It might draw, it will draw.

Q. That has been produced in Bombay?

A. Yes.

Q. By local acting, local direction, local talent?

A. Yes, entirely local.

Chairman: Entirely Indian?

A. Yes.

Mr. Coatman: Don't you think others of the same stamp or even better might be produced?

A. But who will produce them?

Q. The same people?

A. Only one set of people cannot produce.

Q. They have been produced and so others can be produced?

Chairman: I say Madans should produce them.

Mr. Green: Try and produce a better one.

Mr. Coatman: What do you think?

A. We did bring out two experts from home, one Englishman and one Italian, and they taught our people how to produce and handle cameras and all that and then they went away after teaching for two or three years our own camera men?

Q. Was it a success?

A. Our present camera men are those that were taught by them.

Q. Later on, in your reply to question 22 you say, "In pre-war time the London Film Company could readily dispose of their goods". Why did those particular pictures draw?

A. They were very good.

Q. Do you mean the technique was good?

A. Yes.

Q. And the subjects were good also?

A. Yes.

Q. Why do you think that the British film now is not as good a draw as an American film? Is the technique poor, or are the subjects not so interesting?

A. The subjects are also poor, and I think on account of the poor finances, perhaps the technique is also poor. The technique is poor.

Q. In your replies to our Chairman you mentioned that you tried to get Indian pictures taken in England. You said you sent some Indian pictures to England but they were not taken?

A. Yes.

Q. When did you send them?

A. About four years ago.

Q. What about the technique and general ability?

A. In that particular picture it was very good.

Q. What picture was it?

A. I think it was "Nur Jehan," I do not exactly remember the name.

Q. What steps did you take to get it accepted in England?

A. We sent it to our agent. The Calcutta Head Office sent it to our agent and the trade people would not have it.

**Q.** Any way, in these four years has your technique improved?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Supposing you made one, would you make a better picture?

**A.** Yes.

**Mr. Neogy:** You say out of the 350 cinema theatres in India 70 are under your direct control, that is, the company's direct control, and about 25 are being run "in association". How many of those 70 are in the Bombay Presidency?

**A.** Four are in the Bombay city and about 3 in Poona, one in Surat, one in Ahmedabad.

**Q.** How many of the 25?

**A.** I think three.

**Q.** All under your control?

**A.** Not the three.

**Q.** So far as Madans are concerned you look after their interest?

**A.** Yes, and those that are in the Association.

**Q.** What are generally the terms between the Madan Theatres and those that are run "in association"? In what way do you derive your profits?

**A.** We give them on hire.

**Q.** That is to say, you take something per picture?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Do you get any percentage of the receipts?

**A.** Sometimes percentage and sometimes fixed hire.

**Q.** The terms vary from time to time?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** What is generally the rates of percentage that you charge?

**A.** It varies from 20 per cent. to 35 per cent.

**Q.** 35 per cent. will be the maximum?

**A.** Yes. I think so.

**Q.** Is there any uniformity of rate of rent or does it vary according to the picture?

**A.** According to the income that it brings.

**Q.** You make calculations of the income that a picture is likely to bring?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And then?

**A.** And then we come to a settlement. We ask for 35 per cent. and he begins with 15 per cent. and we probably finally end at 25 per cent.

**Q.** Are these theatres which are run "in association" bound to take all their pictures from you?

**A.** No.

**Q.** They are quite free to take pictures from others?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Do they as a matter of fact take pictures from other people, or do you supply them with the majority of pictures?

**A.** We give facilities. If a man is not bound to any man like ourselves, or the Pathe or the Universal, he has to run about every week for his picture. But if he is tied down to Pathe, for instance, for ten programmes or eight programmes, he knows he can go and get the programme at a moment's notice. That is the facility.

**Q.** Is that more or less the practice also in the other parts, that is to say, outside the Bombay Presidency so far as you know?

**A.** I do not know.

**Q.** You have no concern with Madans' affairs outside Bombay?



A. No, not outside Bombay.

Q. You said that one of the reasons, or rather the chief reason, why some of the pictures produced by you in Calcutta failed to draw in Bombay was that some of the provincial practices and customs differ?

A. Yes.

Q. At the same time you stated that although some of those pictures were a failure in your theatres in Bombay they were a success when shown in theatres owned by others. How do you account for this? If really provincial habits and customs are such an important factor, how do you account for this?

A. The picture of Nur Jehan is a universal picture so far as India is concerned. It would appeal to any part of the country and we thought it would appeal to our audience at that time. We showed it here in the Empire and we failed. We gave the same picture to the Globe the very next week or simultaneously I do not remember, and he did a very good business.

Q. So there was nothing wrong from the point of view of provincial peculiarities with that particular picture?

A. No.

Q. The composition of the audience was quite different in the two theatres and that accounted for the difference in the results I take it?

A. Yes. All the educated people came to see that picture, but they left.

Q. Have you purchased or taken on hire any Indian picture, produced, say, in Bombay?

A. Yes, many.

Q. And exhibited them?

A. Not here. In Bengal.

Q. You had to undertake those negotiations on behalf of the Madan Theatres?

A. I did not make any negotiations myself. They used to negotiate directly, but I know one or two instances.

Q. Were they considered to be a success from your point of view?

A. That I do not know.

Q. I take it you have no direct experience of the production aspect of the cinema so far as the Madan Theatres are concerned?

A. No.

Q. You said that you made an attempt to secure a foreign market for some of your pictures. In how many instances did you make that attempt?

A. We sent I think two pictures, "Nur Jehan" and "Dhruvacharitra," to England and both the pictures were returned.

Q. Only to England or did you try any other country?

A. First we tried in England and we failed. And we took one picture in Italy, "Savitri," in Rome, by Italian actors.

Q. You got it produced in Italy with the help of Italian actors and actresses?

A. Yes. We took all the dresses and scenario and everything else from here, and it drew very well with the Indian audience in India.

Chairman: Did you try your pictures in America?

A. No. I do not think so at least. I do not think we ever tried that. But the Head Office will be able to tell you that.

Mr. Neogy: Have you an agent in America?

A. Yes.

Q. I take it, what you think is that unless and until the people in the foreign countries know a little more about ourselves, that is to say, about our history, mythology, habits and customs, it would be very difficult for our films to draw in those countries?

A. Yes.

Q. That is to say, before the films can be popular abroad there ought to be a better understanding between the different peoples?

A. Yes.

Q. I take it therefore that you do not subscribe to the view the films themselves will lead to a better understanding. Without such preparatory work do you think the films will have any chance?

A. At present it has no chance.

Q. And you do not think it is likely they will have any chance till the other people know us better?

A. No chance and unless the films are taken on the same standard as.....

Q. That is another factor. These two factors would determine what chances our films would have in the other countries?

A. Yes.

Q. You said you brought out some experts for the purpose of producing your films. Have you any idea of the terms on which they came out?

A. I do not exactly know.

Q. Were they prohibitive? Very high?

A. It was war-time and it must be so.

Q. What sort of position did they enjoy in their countries? Were they recognised experts, men whose services were worth having?

A. Yes.

Q. And you brought them out on a short term basis?

A. Two years agreement or one-half years agreement.

Q. Did you send out any of your men to be trained abroad?

A. We did not send out any particular man, but two of our directors did go to Europe and America at their own expense and I know they both actually worked in the European and American studios.

Q. Would you ask this Committee to make a recommendation that similar experts should be brought out at Government expense and lent to the different studios that are here?

A. Instead of that I would recommend Government to send out men from here to be trained there, at the least two men every year.

Q. In what branch of the art do you think he should receive training?

A. One should be in the scenario writing and the other should be in the camera business and printing.

Chairman: Did you try "Savitri" in foreign countries?

A. Yes. In the Empire Theatre.

Q. I mean did you try it in England or elsewhere outside India?

A. I do not know.

Q. If it was produced in Italy, I think it might have a better finish.

A. It had a very good finish.

Q. The story itself is a very attractive one, good morals, and I do not know whether it was tried in the European or American theatres.

A. I do not know.

Q. Who is likely to know?

A. The Calcutta people.

Mr. Neogy: You said that you used to get British films quite as good as the American. Are such good British films available now?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you really purchased British films?

A. I do not purchase now. The theatres that are under Madan Theatres, Limited, in Bombay now were independent theatres under independent control formerly. Then there was no Madan Theatres, Limited. It was the Excelsior

Theatre Company on this side and it was J. F. Madan & Co. on the other side of India; and when I am talking about these British pictures we were quite independent.

*Q.* How did the prices of the first class American pictures compare with those of the first class English pictures in those days?

*A.* I do not exactly remember, but I think there was not much difference between two good pictures.

*Q.* What about the average American and average British picture?

*A.* We used to get it on hire from the London Film Company. We never paid any price for it.

*Q.* As for the American you had to purchase the films?

*A.* I never purchased. I got it from Pathè on hire.

*Q.* Did the rates of hire differ very much?

*A.* No.

*Q.* Has there been any great difference in the prices or the rates of hire since then?

*A.* That I do not know.

*Q.* Whatever it was then, the difference in prices does not account for the fact that there are fewer British pictures now in the Indian theatres?

*A.* No.

*Q.* They could not stand competition with America in point of quality?

*A.* I think they do not make....

*Q.* They do not make good films?

*A.* I do not say that, but since the war the studios have been closed down and they left them.

*Q.* And they left the film industry to be captured entirely by the American?

*A.* Yes. In fact some of the producers in America and the actors in America are English, the best of them.

*Q.* They could not find any lucrative employment in their own home and so they left for America?

*A.* Some of them had been to India before.

*Q.* In answer to question 5 you give six instances of successful Indian pictures. Were they all produced in the Madan theatres?

*A.* Yes, but I do not know the figures of anybody else.

*Q.* But couldn't you tell us from your experience of the Bombay theatres as to whether films produced by others have been quite as much a success.

*A.* Yes, I know there have been very good successes. Some of the best pictures have been produced but, of course, I have no direct knowledge of them.

*Q.* If there was any charge against you that you are indifferent about what other people produce that wouldn't be quite correct I think. You do take a good deal of interest in the Bombay produced pictures?

*A.* Oh, yes.

*Q.* What is the method of "previewing" that is prevalent in Bombay. Suppose a picture like "Sacrifice" were produced, would it be shown to the trade exclusively before being exhibited to the public and everybody would be expected to be there?

*A.* Well, I saw a trade exhibition.

*Q.* And everybody generally was there?

*A.* They were.

*Q.* Is that the general practice?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Does that happen in the case of every film?

A. Each studio has certain facilities in connection with certain theatres. The Kohinoor Film Company has the Imperial Theatre and the Imperial Film Company the Majestic. So they take their customers there and show them the films.

Q. I am not talking of that. As far as I am aware when a film is produced in America, before it is released for public exhibition, all the trades people gather and have a preview? Does that system obtain here?

A. No. To my mind the exhibitor sometimes finances them. Of course he advances the money and all that for future production.

Q. May I take it the whole trade has an opportunity of meeting and considering the merits of a film before it is sold out to a particular party.

A. No, we used to buy outright for Bengal and Burma. I mean Madan's.

Chairman: It is not sold but rented out. They sell out one or two copies.

A. Yes.

Colonel Crawford: I would like to understand your actual position. You are the Manager here of Madan Theatres in the Bombay Presidency?

A. In Bombay city.

Q. You have nothing to do with Madan Theatres outside Bombay city. What are your particular functions?

A. I am a Director.

Q. I think you said in reply to Mr. Neogy that you had no right to order your own pictures. You have got to take the programme settled in Calcutta.

A. Yes, they select the programme, whether it is from Pathe or otherwise.

Q. You have no power to say that it is suitable or not suitable for my Bombay audiences?

A. I see a film at its trial and if I find it not suitable I reject it.

Q. Then you have a certain amount of power to reject. But you must refill again from the stock at Madan's?

A. Yes.

Q. Well as regards Madan's productions, I think Mr. Neogy brought out this. Do you think the producer is faced with this difficulty, the difficulty of provincial boundaries. Because for some of his productions the market is confined to one particular province?

A. So far as history, customs and mythology are concerned, it is confined to each province.

Q. Therefore in the Punjab in the main you can only produce a picture for the Punjab province?

A. It would pay better for the Punjab.

Q. You definitely think that is one of the difficulties. You told the Chairman that some of your pictures produced in India were not successful due to the differences of dress and customs. You are definitely of opinion that that is a difficulty to be got over?

A. Yes.

Q. I understand from what you said that the theatres owned by Madan, anyhow in Bombay, cater entirely for an educated class of audience. Now is that educated class mainly composed of Indians or Europeans?

A. I would put it at half and half.

Q. Now then, supposing in our desire to assist the Indian industry we were to suggest the imposition of a quota system for Indian pictures in all picture houses in India.

A. If the quota system is to come then I would advise the exhibitor to have his choice between British and Indian pictures.

Q. So far as you are concerned you would like a certain amount of choice?

A. Yes, because my audiences would not like Indian pictures.

*Chairman:* If you are given the choice you would prefer Western films to Indian films?

A. We must.

*Colonel Crawford:* What sort of Indian films have you shown to your audiences? Take this film "Sacrifice". Have you thought of showing that to your educated audiences?

A. Yes, we did.

Q. You thought of it but you decided against it?

A. The Head Office could not come to terms.

Q. But so far as you are concerned you thought it would draw?

A. It would not have drawn as much as it would draw in the Imperial. It would have drawn our average audience, a little less or a little more.

Q. You think it would only compete with the ordinary type of Western film which is much cheaper to hire?

A. Well, I do not know whether it is cheaper because we did not show this film.

Q. Now, you mentioned briefly the question of topical films. Madan's have produced a certain number. But is there any arrangement to-day to produce All-India topical films?

A. We do not produce any All-India topical.

Q. No effort has been made but do you think such a film would be a profitable concern?

A. Not unless foreign countries take the films.

Q. In India alone it is not sufficient?

A. No.

Q. Is the topical gazette as a rule popular with the audience?

A. Yes, the English topical gazette.

Q. You don't think an Indian topical gazette would be a popular feature in Indian theatres.

A. No, I don't think so. The masses would not take to it.

Q. Are the majority of Western films imported through Calcutta or Bombay?

A. Our films are imported through Calcutta.

Q. Why? Do you send them round by ship?

A. They have got arrangements with their own agents in America.

Q. But does it pass by post or direct shipment?

A. Direct shipment to Calcutta. Some of them do come to Bombay but not all.

Q. Supposing a central board of censors were set up if we had sufficient evidence to think it would be advisable, would it create much difficulty if all films came through Bombay?

A. I would advise two centres for censorship, Calcutta and Bombay?

Q. I understand that is your opinion. But I say supposing that after a thorough enquiry we decide to set up a central board of censors and that one board is sufficient for all Western films, would it create much delay? Surely it is quicker to make the shipment to Bombay and then sent by rail to Calcutta. One is five weeks and the other three weeks.

A. I can't say.

Q. Now then, are you satisfied with the general run of Western films?

A. That we show? Yes. We are satisfied.

Q. You think the producer is giving you the material that draws the biggest audiences.

A. If I may let you into a secret, the American producers send out every year their own men to enquire which artists are liked by the public, and

which stories have gone better and so on. They prepare statistics and then they make the films.

Q. But my impression (and I visit the cinema pretty frequently and more frequently since I have been connected with the Committee) my experience is that a certain class of, generally so called, social films does not draw many people to the theatre. Can you give me a series of figures to show the value or the drawing power of different types of film from your box office returns. We will keep it entirely private. I am not out to pry. But we want evidence as to the exact popularity of different types of films.

A. I have not got it here but I could send it to you.

Q. I should be very grateful.

A. You might get all the information you want from Calcutta because they will be able to give you not only for Bombay but for the whole country. They will give you the exact figure for each film in the whole of India.

Q. Now the Chairman has reminded me of a question I was going to ask you in a different way. We have heard it said that films are particularly produced in America for the Eastern market. Do you know of any such films?

A. I do not know of any such film, but what I said just now I repeat. They collect all sorts of statistics about public liking of artists and stories, and then they go upon that for their next programme.

Q. Well now, I have noticed quite frequently films displayed in some of your first-run theatres showing fashions of ladies dresses of nearly 10 years ago. What are those films that are being shown.

A. That I do not know. It does not apply to Bombay.

Q. This was in Calcutta. Is there a trade in what I might call old films?

A. I do not know. There is a trade in India, some importers do import secondhand films but there are not many.

Q. I understand you to say that the American trade sends its representatives to the Indian market to find out what the Indian market wants. But do you yourself send a man with knowledge of India to America in order to select the films that you think will suit your audiences?

A. Only two of our directors have gone at their own expense.

Q. But you do not have a definite man to do this. You simply have an American firm to do it.

A. They come out every year. I know that one of them is in Bombay now.

Q. Now then, can you give me an idea as to how foreign films are exhibited. Does the importer or distributor sell these pictures outright or is the general system one of hire? I do not want to pry. If you do not want to give the evidence you need not.

A. I personally do not know anything about the system that the head office has got in Calcutta.

Q. You mentioned just now that in certain cases you hire films from Pathe.

A. Yes, we hire films from Pathe.

Q. I suppose there is a general sort of agreement about some percentage of the takings.

A. Sometimes, not in all cases.

Q. Where there are special films you have a special arrangement, a special figure probably?

A. Yes.

Q. I understand the system regarding Indian produced pictures is generally one of hire.

A. At present it is a hire system.

*Q.* Did your company buy the Indian rights of any particular picture, foreign produced picture such as "Ben Hur." Did you buy the Indian rights of that picture?

*A.* Yes, we have got the rights for India, Burma and Ceylon.

*Q.* Now, in a picture of that nature you will show it in your first run theatres. You then hire it out to other exhibitors.

*A.* Not immediately, but after some six months or eight months to other exhibitors.

*Mr. Green:* I would like to ask you one or two more questions about what the Chairman asked you, about the relative cost of Indian and imported films. When we are talking about the cost of a film must not we distinguish between the cost of a copy of a particular film and the cost of producing the original negative.

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Now, I gathered from another witness that usually only about five or six positives are made. Say a film is produced in Bombay. You get your negative and I gather that in some cases only five or six positives are made. Can you confirm that?

*A.* Yes, sometimes eight or ten copies, sometimes five copies.

*Q.* Can you give me some idea of the number of copies that are made of an ordinary American film? Would it be five or ten or nearer 500 or a thousand?

*A.* I do not think 500, but much more than ten. Each country, England, France, Germany, etc., will exchange their films, and I think each country will take about two or three copies.

*Q.* The result of that, I take it, will be to spread the overhead charges on production over a large number of films instead of a small number?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Does that account for the fact that one can import films at what the Indian producer calls a ridiculously low price?

*A.* But the cost is bigger there.

*Q.* The cost of production, but now I am talking about the cost of a particular copy of a film. I don't think you have quite got my point. You have heard of Mr. Ford, who made motor cars by the million. He was able to produce them very cheaply because he produced such a very large number. Any other factory which turned out five a month against the 500 or 5,000 he turned out in a month did not stand a chance, because their overhead charges were so heavy compared to his per unit. I am only trying to get from you whether the cost of an individual copy of a film coming to India of which say 500 copies have been distributed in the world, that cost will be lower than if only five copies were made?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* So I take it you cannot really compare the cost of a production that has yielded only five copies with the cost of one that has yielded, say, 500.

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Do you consider as a businessman that it is unfair competition to go in for mass production?

*A.* No.

*Q.* You consider that, if they could, Indian producers would be well advised to follow that procedure?

*A.* But where is the market for that.

*Q.* That is an answer in effect. If they had the market they could produce many more copies and therefore reduce the cost of each copy. I was very interested in one incidental remark that you made, Mr. Bilimoria. I think you indicated at any rate in one answer that the Star is more important than the plot, that many people go to a film because a particular Star is

acting. You said the American representatives come and enquire of you which Star is the most popular.

A. No, I say they get all the statistics they can regarding stars, plots, etc. They have got several heads so far as I know on which they make enquiries, like the present questionnaire.

Q. That is only one of their heads. Now, may I take you on to the question of censorship. I gather that you are generally satisfied with the present method of censoring but you would like to see a larger Board?

A. Yes.

Q. You suggest a board of 11, most of them to be elected by certain bodies, and a certain small number to be nominated by Government. Is the nomination by Government to allow representation of classes that might fail to get elected?

A. I have only suggested representation from public bodies. I have not mentioned any classes.

Q. But you go on to say the last three should be nominated by Government, in your answer to 34 (a). Is your intention to get a particular class represented? For instance, the Board as elected might have no Muhammadan member.

A. Then they might have a Muhammadan; whatever the short-coming is, the Government might fill it up.

Q. You also suggest that representatives of the trade should be appointed to the Board. Would that not make them their own judges in some measure?

A. I think if there is a representative of the importer or the exhibitor he would be able to throw more light on the picture, because he could say from what angle of vision he looks at the picture. At present he has no means.

Q. But he could hardly give an opinion or a judgment in a trade matter in which he is vitally interested.

A. He himself may not be on the committee.

Q. Has he not already sufficient facilities to approach the Board.

A. I think it would be better if we had more facilities.

Q. You don't want the Board as a whole to see pictures?

A. No.

Q. In fact you want the inspection of films by stipendiaries, by paid gentlemen?

A. Yes.

Q. You do not consider that any other method would be feasible?

A. It would not be feasible and there won't be one standard or uniformity of censorship.

Q. Then the Board, as you contemplate it, would be kind of upper house to which reference would be made, if I might put it like that. If the inspector reports that such and such a film is not satisfactory or should be banned then the Board may come in and see the picture as at present?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you propose that the members of the Board should be remunerated?

A. Oh, yes.

Q. You will increase the cost of the board if you increase the number of members. Will the trade be prepared to pay extra fees to raise such a fund?

A. I think it should be done from an educational point of view.

Q. That is another question. I won't trouble you about it. Now you have made some observation about copyright law. I speak with great diffidence because I know the copyright law is very complicated; but there is a copyright law in India?

A. Not for films.



**Q.** I can tell you from personal experience as Collector of Customs. I was asked to hold up a film under the Copyright Act and there are powers under the Copyright Act, and if any of your films are pirated you can ask the Collector of Customs to hold them up till you can sue in court.

**A.** But we have had cases where films have passed the customs.

**Q.** Why can't you sue the man in court and get an injunction or damages?

**A.** When we know about it, but when we don't there is no penalty for it.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* You have about 70 cinemas in India?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** How many are in cantonments, can you tell me?

**A.** In Poona we have got two.

**Q.** Elsewhere?

**A.** In Karachi we have got one. Of any other place I don't know.

**Q.** Isn't it a fact that in cantonments other cinemas do not exist and you have the monopoly.

**A.** Not in Karachi.

**Q.** Poona?

**A.** There is no monopoly anywhere. Anybody can build in the cantonment. We don't hold any monopoly.

**Q.** I am told the cantonment authorities won't allow others to open theatres.

**A.** We don't prohibit them. We do not ask them not to allow others.

**Q.** Well there is a monopoly of your own theatres with the help of the cantonment authorities, we will say.

**A.** No, but we are not asking the cantonment authorities not to issue any more licences.

**Q.** But they don't issue licences.

**A.** I don't know if anybody has asked and been refused. If such a case comes to our knowledge then I can say.

**Q.** Can you tell me whether the films for audiences in the mofussil and in the city are different at times. I mean the films required to be shown in Bombay and other seaports are much better than those shown in other parts of the Presidency?

**A.** The same films are being exhibited in other parts.

**Q.** Is it not the fact that cheaper kinds of film are shown in the mofussil?

**A.** Not in our theatres.

**Q.** In other theatres?

**A.** I have no experience of other theatres.

**Q.** Is it your knowledge that cases have come to light of films being tampered with after circulation. I may give you an instance "Pati Bhakti." Do you know any others?

**A.** It was not tampered with.

**Q.** Anyway are there any cases which have come to your knowledge?

**A.** No.

**Q.** Isn't it a fact that Indian States provide a profitable market for undesirable films which are smuggled from France and South America?

**A.** We all hear that but I have never seen a film like that.

*Chairman:* Do you pay fairly frequent visits to Indian States?

**A.** I am myself a subject of Baroda. To put a stop to it the censorship should be confined to the customs officials only, as in Australia.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* What is the pay the Inspector draws here who you say is doing work satisfactorily?

**A.** I think he draws more than Rs. 300.

*Mr. Green:* His grade is from Rs. 300 to Rs. 500.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* Is it not a somewhat low salary for a man of his responsibility?

A. I don't think so, because he has had only three or five years' service, and he is now drawing Rs. 300.

Q. I believe he is very helpful to you?

A. I never get films censored.

Q. You think that there ought to be some change, and the whole Board should examine the films in future, and three members may examine one film and the other three may examine the other?

A. In that case there will not be uniformity of standard.

Q. I believe advertising matter, which you say ought not to be censored, is censored in Australia. Do you know that?

A. I know it is censored there.

Q. Can we do it here?

A. How can we do it here?

Q. Why not? It can be done by amending the law?

A. It should be left to the press.

Q. I mean posters and leaflets, pictorial posters, etc.

A. That should be left to the customs officials. If the pictures are indecent from the point of view of morality, the customs officials do prohibit them.

Q. But they have not the machinery. Do you think they should have a machinery for this purpose?

A. I don't say that. I mean boxes containing posters and other advertising matter are always opened out and examined by the customs officials.

*Mr. Green:* Yes, they do it, and all imported goods can be examined by the customs officials. They have a right to do so. They have a right to examine anything and everything.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* But is it done?

*Mr. Green:* Imported posters are frequently examined. I can say that for a fact from my experience.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* Will it not pay to film State ceremonies, public functions and places of interest throughout India? Why not have Indian news just as you have the Pathe Gazette?

A. I will give you a concrete example to show that it will not pay. Though the football match at Calcutta draws thousands of people in Calcutta, it does not draw even 10 people in the cinema in Bombay if we show it on the films. Such a film will draw audiences only in the particular town where the match was played or probably in the particular province.

Q. English news and things of that sort draw good audiences, do they not?

A. Yes, but that is only among the educated classes.

Q. Why don't you show Indian films?

A. To take one copy of an Indian film which would run for 10 minutes it would cost enormously, and it would not pay us to show it in our theatre.

Q. Do you find any language difficulty?

A. Yes, the films made in Bengal cannot be shown in Bombay unless the titles are in Gujrati or Hindi.

Q. How will you overcome this difficulty?

A. We will have to make new titles. If the receipts justify our doing it, then we can do it, but the receipts don't encourage us to do that.

Q. Can you suggest any method by which this language difficulty could be overcome?

A. I myself cannot suggest anything unless there will be a universal language for India, and that is English.

*Chairman:* Make everybody learn Hindi. Thank you, Mr. Bilimoria.

**Supplementary Statement of Mr. ARDESHIR BILIMORIA, Madan Theatres, Limited (Bombay Circuit).**

Regarding Monopoly by Madan Theatres, I wish to emphatically protest against the word monopoly being applied. In this case I may mention that in each town wherever there is a Madan Theatre there are more than one independent theatres owned by outsiders.

Regarding the charge that we do not show any of the Indian produced films in our theatres in the Bombay Presidency, I wish to point out that all our theatres only cater for the public who wish to see Western productions, and they are all located mostly in the Cantonments or European part of the city.

We ourselves produce Indian films but cannot show them in our own theatres in Bombay and we have to give them out to outsiders for exhibition in their theatres.

We have no monopoly of either films or theatres, but we are in a position to offer a chain of theatres in a large number of towns—though independent theatres also exist in these towns—thus placing greater facilities to Film Suppliers whose films we can afford to show.

Our Head Office at Calcutta will further enlighten the Committee with facts and figures when they visit Calcutta.

**Written Statement by Mr. RUSTOMJI DORABJI, Proprietor, Wellington, West End and Venus Cinemas, dated the 8th November 1927.**

1. Yes, I am in this line for the last twelve years in India.

2. (a) and (b) The type of audience is dependent on the locality of the theatre and the type of audience catered by the Management, for instance, at my Wellington and West End theatres nearly 95 per cent. of the audience is educated, whereas in my Venus at Parel nearly 90 per cent. of the audience is illiterate.

(c) A very small proportion of the audience under 14 years age is generally brought by their parents in the absence of somebody to look after such children while away from their parents' eyes, and nearly in all cases such children are found to be playing in the auditorium or sleeping in the chairs.

3. The most popular Indian films are mythological and historical.

4. Yes.

5. No.

(a) No.

(b) Yes.

(c) Indian films are extraordinarily remunerative to the Producers and the exhibitor, for example "Lanka Dahan" and "Krishna Janama" and many others which have paid the producer ten times the cost of production, as profit.

6. (a) No with educated, and yes with illiterate.

8. (a) No.

(b) More educated and better talented business people are wanting as film producers.

9. No. In the words of the world's greatest financiers, P. Morgan, "The Film industry is an industry without brains."

10. No.

11. No. Because film parcels are generally carried by Railways in parcel trains which means great delay. If they were carried by Mails it could improve the matter.

12. 15 per cent. handicap.
14. Not materially.
15. No. In India there are over a dozen different languages and one who can read his own language only, finds other Indian languages to be as foreign as English.
16. No.
17. So long as the film producers, etc., do not win over public confidence the capital required will never be forthcoming.
18. The subject may appear as a very easy one on paper only, but will be found to be contrary in practice and will fail.
- 21-22. No.
- (a), (b), (c) No.
23. To a great extent, but for a shorter period only.
24. (a), (b) No.
- (c) They are like mirrors and can only reflect the individual tendency.
- (d) (1) Yes.
- (2) Yes.
- (e) There may have been some which could be fully counterbalanced by the educational value of the films.
25. No.
26. As it stands, it is ample.
- (b) "After Six Days", which was brought about by some malcontents and mischief mongers and proved to be false on further investigations.
27. No. The Cinegoer knows his business and he does not visit the theatre whose pictures are unintelligible to him.
- (b) Some years back the American and English producers showed bad taste about Asiatics (Indians included) depicting them as bad characters but since it has touched their pockets they have left it.
- 28-30. No.
31. (a) Yes, if judicious and just.
32. Yes, quite satisfactory.
33. (a) Yes, to a very great extent.
- (b) Certainly.
- (c) Of course.
34. No.
- (2) Certainly.
- (b) No.
- (c) It will create unnecessary confusion.
35. Yes.
- (b) Yes, but the members of the board must be honorary.
36. (a) Bombay yes, Calcutta do not know. As far as Bombay Censoring is concerned I don't think even one per cent. censored film has been complained off by the Public.
- (b) No.
37. (a) Yes.
- (b) None whatsoever.
38. Yes.
39. No.
40. No. Otherwise, it will be physically impossible for the cinema trade, when picture postcards are allowed to be sold in the Bazars.
41. Certainly in foreign films.
42. The trade and Censor must be kept apart.

43. (a) No.

45. No.

(b) No.

In conclusion, I must mention that from newspaper reports I have found that certain people have tried to pose themselves as President and Secretary of Cinema Trades Association, which is likely to convey a great misleading impression as the Madan's Theatres Ltd., holding four theatres of their own, namely, the Excelsior, the Empire, the Empress and the Edward and controlling the Globe and the Crown Theatres, are not the members of this so-called association. Also the Pathe Freres controlling the Royal Opera House and myself as the proprietor of the Wellington, West End and Venus Cinemas have nothing whatever to do with this self-styled association, and I am anxious to put the correct facts before the committee.

**Oral Evidence of Mr. RUSTOMJI DORABJI, Proprietor, Wellington, West End and Venus Cinemas, on Tuesday, the 15th November 1927.**

*Chairman:* Mr. Dorabji, you have been 12 years in this line, is it not?

A. Yes, Sir.

Q. Do you do this business alone or have you any other business?

A. I am doing other business also. I am the proprietor of the Wellington Motor and Cycle works. I am also the proprietor of three theatres in Bombay which are all situated in different localities, namely one at Dhobi Talao, one in Charni Road, and one in Parel. The theatre at Dhobi Talao is generally patronised by educated Indians, the one at Charni Road is patronised by Anglo-Indians and educated Indians and the one at Parel is patronised by mill hands.

Q. Which is that one, is it the Venus?

A. Yes.

Q. In the two first named theatres you only exhibit western films?

A. Yes.

Q. And in the last you exhibit only Indian films?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you exhibit any western films in the last?

A. I did try some western films in the Venus, but it was not successful, so that I show only Indian films there.

Q. Do you show any western films in the Venus which you don't show to European or Anglo-Indian audience?

A. Yes, they were shown.

Q. But I want to know the practice that is followed by exhibitors here. When you or other people show western films where Indian films are shown, I believe those western films are the ones which are already shown to the European or Anglo-Indian public?

A. Not necessarily. It all depends upon the collection. On the Indian theatres the rates are lower, and therefore first preference is always shown to better class theatres.

Q. What I want to know is this. The educated public, whether European or Indian, have an opportunity of giving their opinion on western films before they are shown in backward tracts?

A. Yes, that is right.

Q. So that the European community, if they want to object to any film before it is shown to the uneducated classes, can do so in the first instance and they have an opportunity to object to any films, is it not?

A. That is right.

Q. Have you ever heard any complaints from the educated Indian community or the European community about any films at any time?

A. As far as Europeans are concerned, I have not heard any complaints; but as far as Indians are concerned, some years ago some American and other continental film producers were trying to show oriental life in dark colours, and our Indian customers made complaints about it. Then the exhibitors declined to show such pictures and it touched their pockets.

Q. Indians took care to complain when the orientals were shown in a bad way? Did they complain to you?

A. The public made a general complaint, and we brought it to the notice of the producer and things were rectified.

Q. But the European public never cared to complain?

A. I don't remember to have heard any complaints from them.

Q. I mean, the poor uninformed Indian is blamed by many witnesses, that is why I want to see whether the educated and European community did their duty?

A. On the contrary, if a picture is good, the audience always said, 'Oh, it is a nice picture' and so on.

Q. To your knowledge neither you nor other exhibitors have received any complaints about western life being shown in a manner which is likely to be injurious to the Indian public?

A. I have not heard of any such complaints.

Q. Have you seen any complaints in the Anglo-Indian press about it, that is to say, that films shown in the Fort theatres, to which Europeans and educated Indians resort, are objectionable?

A. No, Sir, my attention has not been drawn to it.

Q. And if you and other exhibitors had known of such complaints you would have taken steps to remedy such a state of affairs?

A. Certainly.

Q. I suppose you show good, bad and indifferent western films?

A. We have our own trial run first, and we reject bad and indifferent films.

Q. Have the European or educated Indian audience shown by signs or murmurs any disapproval of any scenes?

A. I have not heard of any complaint. On the other hand, they have always applauded.

Q. My point is this. The European and the educated Indian create taste in the country?

A. Yes. On that point I can say that very recently I had shown a picture known as "The Fourth Commandment." It was a very nice subject particularly for girls to know, but some of the young ladies did not like it. Because a daughter-in-law was maltreated by her mother-in-law, and later on when the daughter-in-law became the mother-in-law she began to maltreat her daughter-in-law, and so the young ladies disapproved of it. But that does not mean that my pictures are not appreciated.

Q. You think that a very small proportion of the audience are children?

A. Yes, a very small proportion.

Q. I suppose they appreciate comic shows?

A. Yes, and if there are big scenes or if the photography is not quite clear, they don't take any interest in the shows. Breaking of crockery and other things where there is a lot of mischief-making are always liked by children.

Q. I notice here you say that such children are found to be playing in the auditorium or sleeping in the chairs?

A. Yes, if there is a drama film, little children don't take any interest, and to my knowledge some of the parents leave their children with the ayah or with someone in the compound to play about, but when poor parents who can't afford the luxury of an ayah, come, they keep their children with them and the children are always seen sleeping.

Q. I suppose you are not averse to having Children's Shows?

A. Oh, no, I am having them. I had one only last week.

Q. Are these shows very popular?

A. Yes. I invited some girls of the schools to see "The Fourth Commandment," and they enjoyed the show very much.

Q. Was it free or by tickets?

A. It was not free, but we charged only 4 annas for all classes. I showed that film in the morning.

Q. So you think Children's Shows are popular?

A. Yes, they ought to be.

Q. Is it paying to the trade to have Children's Shows?

A. Of course, it does not touch my pocket, because my earnings of the evening are not in any way affected. But I give such shows more by way of service to my staff because they are paid extra.

Q. Is it common with the exhibitors to do it?

A. They don't do it generally, because it is not responded to by so many schools, otherwise a chapter from history, say the life of Oliver Cromwell or Napoleon, could be learnt in a dark room much quicker and it will make a much better impression because in the schools they take more than a fortnight to teach one chapter.

Q. Do you think there are other exhibitors like you who would organize children's shows of their own accord?

A. I fear the schools will not patronise such shows.

Q. I believe Indian films are becoming more and more popular?

A. Yes.

Q. A little while ago you said that some American and continental producers showed bad taste about Indians by depicting them as bad, but that since it touched their pockets they have stopped making such pictures. What are these pictures which you have in mind? Were they produced in foreign parts?

A. Yes, they were made outside India.

Q. Indians were given certain characters?

A. Yes.

Q. Now they have dropped the idea?

A. Yes.

Q. You are an importer also, is it not?

A. I am interested in importing.

Q. Do you know if really any pictures are produced in foreign countries only for exhibition in the East or in India?

A. No, it is not like that. We have a magazine known as 'The Moving Picture of the World' and all the pictures of one company . . . . .

Q. There are many people who have made this complaint, and I have seen that statement made by a Member of the House of Commons also?

A. I have never heard of Americans manufacturing films specially for the East.

Q. Would it be a paying proposition if they made such pictures specially for the East?

A. I doubt it.

Q. Do you object to posters being censored?

A. There is nothing in the posters to censor because the manufacturers have their own Boards of Review. I don't think there is any reason for censoring the posters here.

Q. Have you heard any complaints about posters being censored?

A. No.

Q. What is your objection to censoring the posters also?

A. It will mean unnecessary annoyance and waste of time.

Q. When they see for instance scenes of drinking or wild dancing and all that, where they are shown on western films?

A. There you see the uneducated Indian has very little opportunity of seeing that.

Q. They don't care to see it—the educated youths?

A. As far as the educated youths are concerned I have heard from some of my audience that they have learnt from my films how a man should dance, how he gets drunk, how to carry himself.

Q. Don't you think it has any effect on the Indians?

A. It has an effect on both sides as one takes it.

Q. You put it here that it is only a mirror that reflects the individual tendency. But isn't the individual tendency to be developed? If a boy or girl has a passionate tendency, by seeing these shows wouldn't that tendency be developed?

A. That's right, Sir. From my own experience I have found that even some of these people have asked me why I was not showing crime films. They were possibly interested in studying the methods of the burglar. On the other hand, many people have remarked: "What a clever detective!" Therefore the general public were looking at it in different ways. I will give you one instance of what the film can do in teaching the public. You may have read in the "Times of India" that a Japanese jumped from an aeroplane 2,000 feet high. When he was questioned how he did it, he said he had seen it in the various films. So, similarly, if a man wants to be a thief he can learn it from the screen just as he can learn it from a book.

Q. Do you think cinema-going to such people would be injurious?

A. Well, if a man wants to spoil himself, there is nothing on earth to stop him.

Q. Why should we provide facilities for him to learn these things?

A. But you would have to stop the good with the evil.

Q. You think there is a lot of good in the cinema?

A. The good is greater than the evil which is done by the cinema.

Q. You are not a member of this Association of which Rao Sahib Munim is the chairman?

A. No, Sir, there is nothing like an association.

Q. Whatever it is, you are not a member?

A. No, Sir, I am not. I would just say that the association does not exist.

Mr. Green: Mr. Rustonji, we have heard a certain amount of threats of monopoly. You probably know to what house I am referring. Has it hurt you in any way?

A. No, Sir.

Q. Have you found any obstacle in getting pictures because of the existence of a powerful circuit in India?

A. No.

Q. It has not interfered with you in any way?

A. Never.

Q. Or prevented you from getting pictures or forced you to take pictures?

A. Not at all.



*Q.* They have not tried to squeeze you out of your theatres?

*A.* Not at all.

*Q.* Are you a member of the Association in Bombay?

*A.* But the Association does not exist. That is what I am saying. It is dead for the last six years.

*Q.* But they have given evidence before us.

*A.* That is right. It is bogus. They are not alive.

*Q.* You mean to say it does not include all the members of the trade?

*A.* No, no. Only one or two people.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* It is not sufficiently buried. I suppose they are still alive.

*A.* Because, excuse me, I have heard one remark that we could afford to pay more duty on foreign subjects.

*Mr. Green:* I will ask you about that, as I have had experience in the Customs. At present the customs tariff duty works out to Rs. 37-8 per thousand feet. It has been suggested to us that that could easily be increased to Rs. 375. Would that damage your business?

*A.* It would ruin it altogether.

*Q.* Why?

*A.* Because the Indian producers themselves get their positive from Kodaks at Rs. 19 for 400 feet which works out to three pice or ¾ anna per foot.

*Q.* They tell us it costs an anna a foot.

*A.* No, Sir, this is the price. It was only yesterday before making that statement I got it from Kodaks. Now, if they could produce a picture at 3 pice or ¾ anna and when an importer has to pay an equal amount as duty alone, because at 4 annas on 15 per cent., 3 pies is the duty alone.

*Q.* You are not a producer? You are an importer?

*A.* I am neither. I am not importing on my own. I am financing others to get the thing for me.

*Q.* But do your theatres import the films themselves or do you get from Pathè?

*A.* No, Sir, I don't import on my own account. We hire them.

*Q.*—From Pathè?

*A.* From anybody.

*Q.* Then you are simply frightened that if the duty is increased you will have to pay more.

*A.* It is not necessary. If one could get a thing for 3 pies and one has to pay duty 3 pice plus 4 annas, that is tremendous.

*Chairman:* Do I understand you to say that the Indian produced films are as cheap as foreign films?

*A.* They are more so.

*Q.* Cheaper to produce?

*A.* Absolutely so.

*Mr. Green:* May I take you on to the question of censorship. You seem to be quite satisfied with the existing arrangement?

*A.* Quite. It is O. K.

*Q.* You are opposed to any idea of a central board?

*A.* I don't like that.

*Q.* Can you explain your answer a little further? Why are you opposed to a central board?

*A.* Well, the central board may be situated at Calcutta or Bombay; well, except for those who are at that centre, the rest of the importers will have enormous trouble and a lot of delay in putting their pictures on the market.

**Q.** You mean because they would have to send their films there.

**A.** Yes. It would mean an enormous waste of time, and possibly embarrass them financially.

**Q.** Would it be necessary for you to have a representative at the seat of censorship?

**A.** No, I think the censors and the importers must be kept apart.

**Q.** I don't mean that. I mean if there was a central board say at Delhi, would you find it necessary to have a representative say to attend to the licenses.

**A.** That is right. I must have my man.

**Q.** Your other point is, you don't want a representative on the board of censors? You mean no trade representative?

**A.** No trade representative, because he would be open to undue influence there.

**Q.** I am interested to hear that because several producers suggested that the trade should be represented.

**A.** If one is represented, after all one is human and one may be just tempted to cause harm to one's opponent. Let the censor be independent and absolutely straightforward.

• **Q.** Now, in reply to a later question, 35 B, we asked "Would you prefer a whole-time experienced paid officer as the censor?" And you said "Yes, but the members of the board must be honorary." Is your idea that each port should have a well-paid staff of whole-time stipendiary officers actually to examine the films?

**A.** That is right.

**Q.** What will the members of the board do?

**A.** If there is a difference of opinion between the importer and the examiner, let the board come in and be the judge.

**Q.** And you want them to be entirely honorary?

**A.** They ought to be.

**Q.** Could you get the gentlemen to serve?

**A.** If we can't then it is no fault of ours. But payment I don't like. Because some of them I have seen dozing. They don't care to look at the pictures.

**Q.** I don't quite see how the question of honorarium affects that.

**Col. Crawford:** I want to try and understand, Mr. Rustonji, your actual position. You are the proprietor of the Wellington cinema?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Are you in association with Madans?

**A.** Yes, I am at present in association with them. About 8 months back I concluded an arrangement to take films from them. Before that, I was taking films from the Globe Theatres, Calcutta, and also from the Universal Picture Corporation, and a man in Karachi, the Paramount Pictures Corporation.

**Q.** Now, do you get your whole programme from Madans?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And that excludes your showing Indian films? Have you entered into a contract that you should show Madans programme and does that prevent you showing Indian films that you wanted?

**A.** No, Sir, I am just showing at the Venus an Indian programme from outside. I gave a trial to Madans but they did not take with my audiences in the mill area. This cinema is in Parel in the mill area, and the audience is principally composed of mill hands and hamals.

**Q.** And therefore you have now given up showing western films there?

**A.** Yes.

*Q.* And do Madans' provide you with Indian films?

*A.* They give me some and the rest I get from (?)

*Q.* Have you shown any of Madans' own productions?

*A.* Yes, I have.

*Q.* And have they been successful?

*A.* Yes, now they are good.

*Q.* And were they successful? Did they bring you enough money?

*A.* That is right. I was not dissatisfied with them.

*Q.* Now you made some allusion to the question of complaints from various of your clients, the persons who attend your cinemas. There I suppose you are alluding to complaints by educated persons visiting your cinemas, not by uneducated. The uneducated class presumably make no complaints?

*A.* They have their complaints as well.

*Q.* Of the nature that you don't show detective films and so on. But as regards the moral standard of the films, your complaints come from educated people?

*A.* As far as the Wellington cinema is concerned, I have got an audience nearly all educated. As far as my Venus cinema is concerned, the whole lot is uneducated.

*Chairman:* I didn't understand him to say that they complained.

*Col. Crawford:* When we were talking I think he said that they complained.

*Chairman:* About the oriental being shown. On the other hand, he said that there was no complaint at all about western films.

*Col. Crawford:* He said that his educated audience did complain of certain types of pictures.

*A.* Just as I told you about "The Fourth Commandment." Similarly it may not suit the individual taste.

*Q.* Yes, I notice that you went on to say that the complaint generally came from people whom the cap fitted. Now, can you, without our prying too much into your private affairs, show us the popularity of various classes of films from your copy of your box office receipts?

*A.* You want the pictures named?

*Q.* No, I mean figures are so very much more convincing than just an expression of opinion. If you could say well here now is an educational story film, receipts from a film of that nature for the week in which it was shown were so much. Here is a social drama film, receipts from that type of film for a week were so much.

*A.* Then I will start at the beginning. At one time in Madras at my theatre "The Life of Krishna" was shown and where the road is 100 feet broad in front of my theatre, the whole road was blocked with traffic in vehicles, motors, and tramcars.

*Chairman:* Where was that picture produced?

*A.* It was produced in Bombay by Phalke.

*Q.* Do you consider that Madras people do not approve of Bombay pictures?

*A.* They liked it so much that at night I could not carry my money in my hands, I had to take it in a rickshaw.

*Q.* Yes, I know the crowds.

*A.* Everybody in Madras must know what I used to show and how I used to handle it.

*Col. Crawford:* Now then, therefore your box office receipts will show the public you get for the different classes of films and that is very much what I would like to get some figures on. I wonder if you could send us any?

A. I would not mind. I would like to show it to anybody, if it is interesting to the general public. I will give you one concrete example. After that I showed a film which was known as "After Six Days", an American film. Now the film was based on one camera trick. The Israelites crossing the Red Sea through the water which parted for them and when the Egyptians followed they were drowned. On this film I had made a great deal of money. But it was based on a very common trick. That little trick the public could not understand and they flocked to it in great numbers. But when people took to repeating the same thing over and over again and they got to learn how the trick was done, they didn't like to see it. And that is the main reason why Indian producers are so very backward.

Q. But what I really want to get at for my own satisfaction is to find out what types of films are really popular and I always feel that figures give us a better proof than anything.

A. No, Sir, as I told you before, the film industry is not dependent on one man only. The great thing about the American film, the secret of its success, is their mechanical knowledge and it may be that it is just a trick. I remember a scene where a man jumps from a mountain on to a tree and the tree bends right down to the ground, but that tree is really a hose-pipe.

Q. Have you been to America?

A. No, Sir. But I have read the books about these things.

Q. Now you spoke of something which interested me particularly—children's performances. I gather that you have given children's performances yourself and found it a commercially paying proposition?

A. It is.

Q. And yet when the Chairman pressed it, you said that people would not take it up at present.

A. I said the schools won't help us.

Q. Well, if the audience won't come it won't be a paying proposition.

A. If they don't come in a body and we only charge them 4 annas I might not even be able to pay the electricity bill.

Q. You can't force the schools to come. You showed a film and you got the school children to come and it paid you.

A. They did. And if you don't have it too often they would probably come again. But often they won't come.

Q. How often? Once a month?

A. I doubt it.

Q. Is there an adequate supply of films for such purposes?

A. Oh yes.

Q. Can you get films such as are very popular with children at home—natural history films. Have you ever had them out here?

A. We have historical films for instance giving Napoleon's life.

Q. I don't mean historical, but natural history. The life of the animal world as shown on the film.

A. No, the difficulty is that that type of pictures are generally divided into parts—at one time they may show one little thing for ten minutes, and another week something else.

Q. But I have seen a whole film depicting the life of the fly or the growth of wheat.

A. It is only about one individual fly and lasts for about ten minutes.

Q. I have seen about a thousand feet of film. Are those sort of films not available in India?

A. No, in the old days they used to be, but now it is a thing of the past.

Q. Now, you made a statement that interested me in reply to the Chairman asking you whether America or any other country produced films

specially for the East. You said "No, to manufacture solely for the Indian market is not a paying proposition."

A. Right.

Q. Well now, how is it the Indian producers manage to make it pay?

A. Sir, touching the point of America. . . . .

Q. My only point is that you say this production for the Indian market from the Indian point of view is not a paying proposition.

A. I want to say it in another way. America, when they produce one negative, from that for themselves, in America itself, they get a few hundred copies which take out most of the producing cost. India doesn't pay even one per cent. of the producing cost.

Q. Quite, on the ordinary market film. But I understand that you can produce a film in India which will give you a return of ten times the amount of money expended on its production.

A. Very true.

Q. Don't you think that is an attractive proposition to any producer?

A. It is. For which I will give you a concrete example . . . didn't cost them more than Rs. 12,000. I didn't purchase it at the time because I had not seen the film. The company made over three lakhs of rupees on it. But instead of putting all that money into their industry, it was used up for personal luxuries and requirements.

Chairman: This cannot be personal knowledge on your part.

A. It is my personal knowledge.

Col. Crawford: But what I wanted to say is that if there is in India a market for a film costing about £1,000 is it not worth while America making films to send to India that will draw that amount of money?

A. No, Sir. It is impossible. For a thousand pounds they cannot make a film except with one Mr. Nobody and one Miss Not Known and which nobody here will take. We go by the stars still and stars won't come out for cheap prices.

Q. I quite understand your point of view.

Mr. Neogy: This last point—you said that a film produced at a cost of Rs. 12,000 in India gave an enormous return.

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think that it would be possible for America to produce films so cheap in their country?

A. They may do it for their country but not for India in particular.

Q. Quite right. If they can cater for the whole world then the average cost per copy might be very little, but if they were to confine their attention only to India or to the East and manufacture some special films, then the cost would be too large. Isn't that so?

A. If the market for the American film is restricted to India.

Q. If they have to manufacture specially for India and the East?

A. India would not buy it. They want all the stars in it.

Q. Why do you assume there won't be a star? Supposing they have the usual star and then they manufacture a particular film only for showing in the East, do you think they can manage to manufacture it at a cheap rate?

A. No, they cannot, because stars won't go into the arena at low rates.

Q. So the cost would be prohibitive. There is no inducement. I take it, for America to produce films specially for the Indian market?

A. It is impossible for them to do it.

Q. Now, you have been long in the trade?

A. For twelve years.

Q. And do you find from your experience that your choice in the matter of films is becoming more and more restricted? That is to say, have you

a larger number of films now to deal with and a larger number of films to make your choice from than before?

A. That is right.

Q. Now you say that you have been working in association with Madans for some little time?

A. Yes.

Q. Would you mind giving us a general idea of the terms of agreement between yourself and Madans?

A. Well, I will start at the beginning of my business. That will help you much. First I started dealing with the Universal Pictures Corporation, of which Mr. Chunilal is the local manager. The Universal supplied me with pictures just like tea-blending companies. The producers have some exceptionally good pictures and some very soft pictures. So I tried to give them better price to have the first choice and I used to have the pick. After that some of the pictures I could not book, so naturally we had to find out somebody else and we used to deal with the Globe Theatres in Calcutta. Now there I find some of my best English pictures.

For six months I tried English pictures at the Wellington Theatre and I lost very heavily.

Q. Which period are you talking of?

A. 1926. I showed some British pictures and on every picture I lost money. Then I appealed to the Globe people to change and get some American ones. They disagreed and we then went to Madans, and I have made arrangements with their numerous agencies that they should allow me the first choice and I am getting it.

Q. You do not deal with the Universal any more?

A. I am. "The Fourth Commandment" I have shown. I am just trying to be a free lance in the market, by paying a little more to have my own choice.

Q. When dealing with the Universal had you to take the bad along with the good, that is to say, were you tied down to the whole lump that they offered you?

A. No. I was not tied down. They show me the jewels, and I select from them . . . . .

Q. Supposing you are dealing with the Universal and you want to take, say, the good films, would they say to you, "If you want to have these good films of your choice, you have to take some other films of our choice too along with them?"

A. That is the trouble. But it depends upon the individual customers, how he makes his contract.

Q. That was your experience with the Universal?

A. Yes.

Q. Is that your experience also with Madans?

A. No. They allow me to reject anything. They give me certain facilities.

Q. What about Pathé?

A. It is similar to Universal.

Q. That is to say, you have to take some films of their choice if you want to have some of your own?

A. Yes. Of course, I do not mean that the one which I reject is a bad picture, but it is all a question of taste.

Q. In reply to question No. 17, you say, "so long as the film producers do not win over public confidence the capital required will never be forthcoming." What do you have in your mind when you say "public confidence"?

*Chairman:* In answering that question, please avoid all personal references.

*Mr. Neogy:* You have stated that Indian films are generally remunerative, and so from the financier's point of view there is no reason for his having any want of confidence in this particular trade. What particular kind of public confidence do you refer to?

*A.* As far as the studio life is concerned in India, the actresses, etc., come from the nautch girl or dancing girl sect and they are known as prostitutes. They have poisoned the atmosphere of the studios to that degree, and my experience is that the better people who have gone in, instead of trying to improve the studios, have merged themselves in the bad lot and they have therefore become spoilt children. And the second reason is that the present Insolvency Act is so very favourable to anybody who wants to defraud his creditor that naturally there is a great want of confidence and they do not get the capital required. The capitalist who has money cannot invest it at 4 per cent. and the poor man cannot borrow at 12 per cent.

*Q.* I take it therefore your point is that the decent kind of capitalist won't be attracted to this line in the present circumstances?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Have you any specific suggestion to make as to how the atmosphere of the studios can be improved?

*A.* It could be improved by the formation of some imaginary company, some company where at least men of the world, who have seen the world, with capital, will have it under their own personal supervision. The difficulty is that after a certain age these men of the world do not want to take up all these cumbersome things. I won't recommend any of my friends to send his son into a studio. I won't recommend him to do it. A man wanted to invest Rs. 2 lakhs and I persuaded him not to invest the money on a studio because of the studio life there, and he has withdrawn his offer.

*Chairman:* Why? Because it is not a paying proposition?

*Mr. Neogy:* It has a demoralising effect?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* You say nobody should think of sending his son to a studio?

*A.* Because he generally gets merged in it.

*Colonel Crawford:* What is the position in this regard in the west?

*A.* I have not much idea about it. I have not studied it.

*Mr. Neogy:* You said you are in the habit of studying books relating to these subjects. Do you know anything about the sort of life which the film actors and actresses lead in America, for instance? Have you read anything about it?

*A.* As far as that is concerned, there are black sheep there as well.

*Q.* You have no particular information on that point?

*A.* No. With any authority I cannot say.

*Chairman:* Have you ever been in a studio yourself?

*A.* In Bombay, yes.

*Q.* Do any people live there in the studio?

*A.* Many.

*Q.* They live in the studio?

*A.* Yes.

*Mr. Neogy:* You said that you showed some of Madans' own manufactured pictures in Bombay?

*A.* At my Parel theatre.

*Q.* And also some pictures manufactured in Bombay I take it?

A. Yes.

Q. Was there any great difference in the popularity in Bombay between the pictures manufactured in Bombay and those manufactured in Calcutta?

A. No. The only difficulty that was found with any picture which Madans sent was that they had Bengali titles and they were a hopeless failure.

Q. It was a language difficulty?

A. Yes.

Q. The point was made by certain witnesses that the provincial peculiarities in the matter of dress account for the comparative unpopularity of the films?

A. That goes a great way, because take the picture "Savitri." If the actress is dressed in a particular manner the other people may not like it. Though a sari is a sari, the turn which is given to it makes a great difference. It may be liked by the Mahratta but not by the Guzerati and so on.

Q. From your experience of Bombay you do not think provincial peculiarities have made the Bengali films unpopular in Bombay?

A. No, but they cannot be very popular.

Q. From the box office point of view what do you think of them?

A. If it happens to be a holiday, you get a crowd because they come in simply to spend their time.

• Chairman: Mr. Billimoria told us a different story.

Mr. Nogy: Mr. Billimoria told us a different story yesterday, that Indian pictures produced by Madans in Bengal do not attract audiences in Bombay.

A. It did not attract audiences in Bombay because they tried to show some of the pictures which they had made in Italy in the Excelsior and the Empire. There are certain theatres where it will be a hopeless failure. If I show an Indian picture at the Wellington I shall hopelessly fail.

Q. It depends upon the particular locality?

A. Yes.

Q. Not so much upon the provincial peculiarities?

A. No.

Q. And those people who are accustomed to go to an Indian show would not mind being shown a film produced, say, outside the particular province to which they belong? That I take to be the general position?

A. Yes.

Q. You have not repented having shown Madans' pictures manufactured in Calcutta in some of your theatres in Bombay?

A. Nothing to be sorry about. I will give you one concrete example, and that is "The Light of Asia." Before it arrived in Bombay, the camera man happened to see me. He came to me with a reference to help him. When the picture was produced first it was brought to me with a proposition that I should show it at my Wellington. I declined it with thanks.

Q. Even "The Light of Asia"?

A. Yes.

Q. You thought even that picture won't go down with your audience?

A. Because its after-effects would be very bad.

Q. Have you seen the film "Sacrifice"?

A. No. I have not seen it yet. I have no time.

Q. You stated that at one time there used to be some foreign pictures in which Asiatics, or rather Indians, were depicted in an unfavourable light and they found that those pictures would not be popular in India. And they are no longer sending those things here?

A. They are no longer making them practically.



Q. Are you quite sure they are no longer making them, or is your experience only confined to the policy which they have adopted in the matter of sending out such films to India? That is to say, you can only say they are not sending out such pictures?

A. Yes. They may be showing them in other parts of the world.

Q. With regard to censorship, I find in answer to question 36 (a), "Bombay, yes. Calcutta, I do not know." What do you mean by "I do not know"?

A. Because I have no experience about Calcutta.

Q. Would you be prepared to agree to any system under which you would be required to show a particular percentage of Indian films, say, for instance, even at the Wellington, a system which is known as the quota system? That is to say, so much per cent. of Indian films must be shown in every theatre, and supposing that any such conditions were to be imposed on you for the benefit of the Indian picture trade, would you approve of it?

A. No. It is impossible to work it. If a theatre is asked to show even once a week one Indian picture, even that will ruin that particular theatre altogether, because the Indian habits and the educated man's habits are so wide apart that with the betel leaves and other things which make them equally dirty and stinking, it will take another three weeks by the time you have cleaned it well and put it in order for the better class Indians, and then again in the fourth week they will come and spoil it.

Q. The usual audience which you draw in your Wellington theatre—would such an audience be attracted to any Indian show at all however good it may be?

A. I doubt if they will try to see it even in a cartoon of, say, about 400 feet.

Q. I think your objection mainly is to any sort of compulsion being exercised in the matter of determining the constitution of the programme of any theatre?

A. That is right.

Q. You want an absolutely free hand? That is to say, if any outside agency were to ask you to show any particular kind of film then your audience would resent it?

A. Yes. Otherwise I will ask the Government to indemnify my loss.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer* : What ways and means do you suggest to attract actors and actresses of good family?

A. As it is, for the present studios it is impossible.

Q. What remedy do you suggest for that?

A. I would say, if at all one is inclined, one should divert his attention and energy to something better.

Q. Would you mind asking Government to have a model studio where people of good family could come and act?

A. I think this industry is not a necessity of life or a national industry. It is simply a waste of energy.

*Chairman* : Do you think amusement to the poor is not a necessity?

A. We have got enough of amusement as it is.

Q. Without the cinema?

A. The cinema is there, but I am talking about the production of films that *Sir Haroon Jaffer* is asking me. He is asking me about the production of films, that is, from the exhibitor's point of view.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer* : What remedy do you suggest?

A. I would not like to hazard an answer to that because it is too difficult.

Q. You do not think that any actors or actresses of good family will ever come to this industry?

A. Reputable men and women will not care to come.

Q. Even if the Government is asked to start a model studio with respectable people, don't you think that others will follow? •

A. No. Looking at it from the point of view of our frame of mind, as far as we Indians are concerned, we do not like it. We may like and laugh at some one else doing it, but I wouldn't advocate it for my own son. We may probably ask our neighbour to do it, but we won't do it for ourselves. (Laughter.)

Q. You have no experience of Calcutta?

A. As far as censorship is concerned, I have no experience, but I have been to Calcutta.

Q. Why don't you go to America and get experience and come back here?

A. I was the first man to manufacture gramophone records and after I opened it, a Calcutta factory at Sealdah took to it. It was considered a black art in those days. I made it a success in the first instance, but still I made a terrible loss on it and I closed it.

Q. Do you think any help is needed from Government to improve this industry?

A. No. The only thing is that if the Indian producers leave a certain percentage of what they are earning for the benefit of their own business and studio, I am sure they will thrive like anything. Some people have said that Rs. 20,000 is the cost of production. It is not generally the fact. It is about Rs. 12,000 or 13,000 and the income they get from Bombay alone is Rs. 10,000 or 12,000, and that is the reason which has made all these studios able to cater for Indian exhibition. If they only set apart, say, Rs. 5,000 for the benefit of their studios instead of using it for their own selves, the position of the studios would be very good and they ought to thrive well. They do not need any assistance.

Q. Madans have got about 70 or 80 theatres all over India?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think this monopoly is standing in the way of Indian production? Is there any legislation required to break that monopoly?

A. Where does the monopoly come in? I have received a letter from Madras that they are building a new cantonment at Mount, ten miles from Madras, and they are inviting people to open a cinema there. People have not got much enterprise because they are afraid of losing money. Madans with their big organisation, if they think of going there and if they prosper, —people grumble at Madans. Nobody pays Madans when they lose, but when they do well, people grouse. So it all depends upon the enterprise of that company.

Q. I was told the cantonment people would not allow any other people to open a cinema.

A. If I was invited to open a cinema and if I lose, nobody pays me, and if I earn, why should I not get the benefit of it?

Q. Do you think that cantonments invite such theatres?

A. All the cantonments have not been built in a year or in a day, but when a new cantonment is started they generally invite them.

Q. In Poona there is a Madans' theatre?

A. It is Patel's theatre, and Madans have hired it.

Q. Patel has taken it from the cantonment people and he has hired it?

A. At the time nobody ventured, but Patel did venture it. After Patel's venture, if some body else wants to share and participate in it that is not fair.

Q. Then why do they have so many theatres in Bombay, instead of having only one, such as, the Wellington?

A. Bombay is quite different. This is a place where everybody is living, but a cantonment is a different place altogether.

Q. Poona is a cantonment of some 26,000 people.

A. Now it has become so. I know Poona for the last 35 years. There were no lights then in the streets and it was as dark as hell at night time.

Q. You have talked about the language difficulty. Would you like to have Urdu letters on the titles? There are now no Urdu characters shown. Do you think that will solve the language difficulty?

A. I have tried. I have wasted some good money and it has not been successful. For my Madras show, on my own account and risk, I started making Tamil titles. The difficulty was that Tamil speaking people took it up, but it was not easy to find a man who is a title writer. The art of title writing as far as cinema is concerned, goes a great way. Even the best of authors and journalists cannot be good title writers. To a very great extent I find the Americans have specialised in it and they can teach English to English people. They write titles in such a flowery way.

Q. Do you mean that though you could find title writers in Urdu you could not pay them?

A. There may be, but I cannot afford to pay the price demanded on a commercial basis.

Q. How much did they ask so that you refused?

A. I have not asked them as far as Urdu is concerned. I have tried Tamil and Telugu and I have burnt my fingers.

Q. I am told that Hindustani or Hindi or Urdu is the lingua franca of India. Why don't you encourage this language?

A. All this lingua franca is for something else. India is divided nearly into 28 languages and it is physically impossible for an Indian picture to go on that basis, except that there may be one language and that is English.

Q. How will you solve the difficulty?

A. We have already found it in the National Congress. English is the language in which they talk.

Q. You want it to be English?

A. Yes.

Q. And nothing else?

A. Yes. Not even Guzerati. What I say is this. In the present atmosphere in India, when I travelled in Madras I found even a cooly could talk English but he could not talk Hindustani. Even the Muhammadans of Madras, whose mother tongue is Urdu, have forgotten it and they are all talking Tamil. They even read their Koran in Tamil.

Q. The percentage of boys in primary schools is greater it is said. You say that for boys of the secondary schools who know English, their English is good enough to understand the titles?

A. That is the language. If they start learning English up there they will learn it much earlier. Both will go hand in hand and help each other.

Q. You just now talked about the after-effects of "The Light of Asia." I could not understand you.

A. The modes of life of different people are different. The type of people who like Indian pictures—their way of living is quite different and generally they are people who chew betel leaves and they make things very dirty. Once a theatre is spoiled—let me give you an example—I did show an Indian pictures at my western theatre, "Lanka Dahan," and I made Rs. 18,000 in one week. But it ruined my theatre altogether.

Q. You mean you had to disinfect the cinema . . .

A. I had to disinfect the hall and at the same time I had to convince my audience that I had disinfected it and so on. Till that time I went on losing money.

**Letter dated the 5th November 1927, from ATIYA BEGUM SAHIBA.  
Bombay.**

Since the cinemas have become a force in "life" in general in India, and since the films produced in India are inartistic, crude and vulgar, without any redeeming point in the artistic and historic get-up, I beg to submit the following suggestions :—

- (a) That a series of films be taken showing the art industries of India like Dacca mulmul, shawls of Kashmir, brocades of Benares, etc., etc., showing entire process.
- (b) Biographies of historic figures, and other notabilities in history.
- (c) Films displaying high morals in social life.
- (d) Natural beauties of Kashmir and other places.

In short the tone of films to be educative, inspiring and instructive particularly for schools and children.

I am willing to be responsible for conducting the art side of such films, and help generally.

The music which is played usually in the cinemas is dreadfully jarring, attempts should be made to improve their horrible noises.

Suggestions in details can be given by me personally if required.

**Oral Evidence of ATIYA BEGUM SAHIBA, on Tuesday, the 15th  
November 1927.**

*Chairman* : I am sorry to have kept you waiting.

A. First of all I must thank you for giving me an opportunity of stating what I want to say very badly about the cinemas in India.

Q. You have seen our questionnaire?

A. I am afraid not. It was not sent to me at all. Of course artistically the cinemas interest me, but to-day I think of all the stages the cinema is the one which attracts the public more than any other. Everybody is interested; from the sweeper to the King, all go to the cinema including all classes, all creeds, all ages, all kinds of people in the world; and it seems to be one of the most popular methods of relaxation. Well now, the films that are produced in Europe as a rule are more or less of a sensational character and generally demoralising. But in certain countries efforts are made to make them educative and also to raise the general moralistic principles of humanity. But of course I do not want to go into details of what they are doing there. When we come to the case of India, as in everything else, she seems to take absolutely the worst characteristics that are possible; and it is absolute nonsense to say it has no effect upon the minds of the people. Everybody will go to the cinema, and it is of no use trying to debar people from going, by having an age limit. People will go to cinemas and they will go to all sorts of shows absolutely without any discrimination. Besides you cannot even prevent people from producing films to-day. People will produce films and so far as India is concerned they seem to know no better than to take the worst characteristics that Europeans can give.

Q. Are you talking of Indian films?

A. I am talking of Indian films and also of films shown from America and other places here.

Q. I should like you to keep that distinction in mind.

A. At present I am speaking in a general sense. I will come immediately to the question of Indian films in particular.

**Q.** Your previous remarks refer to all films. I ask because you said something "as everything else in India."

**A.** Yes, like education, for instance.

**Q.** You don't get the best?

**A.** I am afraid not. Our education being defective we generally like to take up the weak and frail things of other nations. We have no education of our own to stand upon. We take anything that comes to us, merely indulging in sensations and impressions, which is very bad for humanity at large.

**Q.** Do you think the films shown here are different—I mean Western films shown here are different from the films shown in England. Have you been to England?

**A.** I have been much there.

**Q.** Do you think Western films shown here are different from films shown in England.

**A.** Well, there are good and bad films there, though there are more films of a sensational character shown here. Besides what may be good for one country is not necessarily good for another. Our customs, manners, our methods of thinking are different. Therefore what might be true there, might not be true here.

**Q.** Does your remark apply to all classes, including the educated?

**A.** Yes, for all classes, there is a general demoralising effect. It is no use saying there is not, and shutting your eyes to it. I may say this in order to show what films can do in India: not long ago—this is a personal matter but I think everybody knows about it—there was a Prince who was a regular theatre-goer and he committed suicide. All his people (who belong to a prominent State in India) deplored the condition of these films which had brought about this calamity.

**Q.** He had travelled in Europe.

**A.** Yes, but he was not educated in Europe.

**Q.** Where did he see the films?

**A.** In Bombay.

**Q.** He learnt suicide from seeing the films.

**A.** That is what his own people said. He had been mixed up in a peculiar sort of squabble and the result was this, and that is not the only instance. They really have a very demoralising effect, these films in India, and they can be remedied.

**Q.** Have you made any complaint about the films shown in Bombay hitherto?

**A.** To whom?

**Q.** To the Censorship Board. You know there is a Censorship Board in Bombay?

**A.** But I wonder whether it is of any use making complaints. I have written articles in the papers and spoken at public institutions. If the Board are prepared to allow such films, they cannot remedy the state of affairs, they are careless and the producer's one concern seems to be how much money he can make out of a film and simply push it through anyhow. Surely the Board of Censors can read what I have written and said. But I really don't think we have a responsible Board of Censors. There must be a responsible Board to control the films produced here.

**Q.** What do you mean by "responsible"?

**A.** Responsible persons who would guard the artistic, educative, historical and national side of the story and not pass on. But the films have got to be taken into careful and serious consideration. It is no use producing sensational stuff and saying you are going to have an age limit, or this limit and that limit. There cannot be and should not be any limit to film goers. All

enjoy going to a certain extent and those impressions must be educative and not of a demoralising kind.

Q. Do you think the mischief is created more in the class of people who see these Western films?

A. Both. I have no use for those frantic love scenes, those indecent dances and night clubs, etc., those sort of things when they are shown in Europe or India it is no joy to see them. I go because I am connected with education and therefore I sometimes try to tell the educational authorities not to take their children to these films. Of course what is indecent to us might not be indecent to them. I do not want even to criticise Western films. My whole cry is that the Censorship Board must be people of responsible ideas and they must also regard Indian ideas and ideals before they pass any film.

Q. If you hold such strong views, one would have expected that being a public critic as you are, you would have known of the existence of the Board and complained to them.

A. I think it is useless to complain to them.

Q. Have you never tried?

A. Not personally or directly, I frankly admit I have not. But the point is this. The very fact that the Board allows these films to go forward shows that they do not take it seriously. In fact look at this paper I have here containing advertisements of pictures. "Love is Blind".

Mr. Green : Have you seen that film?

\* A. No.

Q. You are just judging by the title?

A. I mean the whole thing is so demoralising, not this particular thing, here is more, "The Prostitution Question," "Tainted Virtue," "Love's Gamble." The whole page from top to bottom is horrible to read. It may be all right perhaps in Europe but it really does not do in India.

Q. You object to the title "Love is Blind."

A. I do. I don't think we would put it in that way. It is not only the one title but I mean the whole concern. Why shouldn't we have a better class of films. We are spending enough money in India. You cannot avoid doing that. I do confess that the studios are pretty rotten. Everything passes through. And look at the behaviour of the women. They overpaint themselves; they are underdressed and overpainted. To what class of people do they belong? What is their history? Take any Indian film, from top to bottom whether it be mythological, historical, artistic, social, national, etc., there is absolutely no redeeming point anywhere. And when I have spoken to these producers they have said "We are only concerned with the money it brings us."

Chairman : I suppose you take strong exception too to the modern habits and ways of women?

A. Yes, if it is necessary, to speak about it here.

Q. I mean they see it in life.

A. Yes, I am afraid I have no use for all that sort of modernism. I wish I could change it all for India; anyhow, when I am in charge of the municipality schools for which I am fighting, I hope to do something in that way! We can have our own films! With the same amount of money, the same in academic capacity, and with the same people; we still can have a much better class of film, if rightly conducted.

Q. I daresay you see the "Times of India" Illustrated Weekly.

A. Unfortunately I do.

Q. You are a severe critic and I suppose you take strong exception to some things which appear there, specially the Leg Competition, the pictures of ladies in bathing costume and all that?

A. If it is necessary to discuss that, I am afraid I do.

**Q.** Would you advocate censoring on those lines of the newspapers also.

**A.** Well, if it is not beside the point certainly I would.

**Q.** You do think there should be a stricter censorship?

**A.** Yes. Don't you see that Europeans consider it rude to sit with their hats on; while we consider it rude to sit without hats in front of other people. There is the difference in the two ideals. Even those who would imitate the West are going too rapidly and they have recognised their mistake!

**Q.** You think Bombay is going too rapidly.

**A.** Much too much; without reasons even the West is going too rapidly, but whatever they do they have their own people to look after them. So far as India is concerned there is no one to look after them, then why copy the worst of the West? The state of affairs is really terrible.

**Q.** If you had Mussolini's powers for a day I daresay you would alter the whole thing in a day.

**A.** Yes, if it is a matter of a day! But if someone were to ask me to organise half a dozen films I could produce something which people of all classes would like to see and enjoy seeing, I am sure, and get some good idea from it, anyhow, artistically and from all standpoints.

**Q.** Anyhow we are glad to have your impression of things. You take a strong view and I hope you will induce other ladies also to take strong views and improve the morale of the films. It is they who set the fashion.

**A.** You mean the ladies?

**Q.** Educated ladies and gentlemen, by patronising such shows.

**A.** That is merely a matter of fashion. It is the fashion to go to cinemas any everybody does it, having nothing else to do and without thinking.

**Q.** Don't you think if you saw a film and found something objectionable you would at once write to the press to ask what is the meaning of showing such a film?

**A.** So far as the poor press is concerned they are really fed up with my strong firm views, perhaps they have had too much of them! I am always stating what I feel is good for the public.

**Sir Haroon Jaffer:** With reference to what you say in your statement, that you are willing to be responsible for conducting the art side of such film production, do you think you would be able to get good actors and actresses from respectable families.

**A.** Respectable or not, so long as we can produce a respectable film!

**Q.** We were told by certain witnesses that it is impossible to get actors and actresses from respectable families.

**A.** That is not quite correct. I am always organising shows and I know you can get them. The point is that with a better atmosphere I think it is quite possible.

**Q.** Do you think that Government should start a model studio or help the producers who are already here.

**A.** Help the producers already there, because you need not then incur much extra expense. Of course if a new studio could be started it would be all right in due course, not just yet.

**Q.** Started by Government?

**A.** Government or otherwise.

**Q.** I mean to help the industry some say it is better to have a studio started by Government as a model school.

**A.** If it comes to that why does not the municipality do something in that line? The other day the matter was disposed of in the municipality casually. They were not going to have anything to do with films. They said it was not their concern and had no time. The corporations are the city fathers and must not shirk their responsibility.

**Chairman:** I quite agree with you.

A. They cannot ward it off in that way. All these people go to the cinema and they know the disastrous effects as much as anybody and yet they want to shirk their responsibility. Government is always willing to help if you help yourself, I think.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* You say that the instrument of instruction should be the cinema.

A. I cannot help it. It happens to be a very important factor.

Q. You mean instruction in the classroom.

A. Yes, I think a cinema is more popular than a lantern film.

Q. You would like to have this thing in the classroom?

A. We cannot avoid it. We want cinemas good films, instructive.

Q. You would like to have it?

A. Certainly I should. The children think they are going to a cinema show and they are unconsciously excited over it and unconsciously influenced.

Q. Will it be very instructive?

A. It can be very instructive if we make it so. It is not now. Now it is very demoralising and degenerating. It is a slow gradual poison which humanity is being poisoned with to-day.

Q. We were told that one Bulchand Karamchand of Hyderabad started such a business but it was a failure.

A. I do not believe it can be failure if it is run by proper people. You see an illustrated lecture is more interesting to some people whereas a cinema is a catchword. They jump at the idea. Everybody likes to go to a cinema.

Q. Would you like Government to open a class in the College of Science or the school of art for cinema instruction, where producers and others may take lessons.

A. Like a dramatic class? To teach actors and actresses?

Q. Yes, to teach them how to do it.

A. I see. I think it would be a waste of money at the present moment. It is not necessary to start a huge class with highly paid professors.

Q. How will you teach them?

A. You go to one of these wretched studios and you simply show the people who are acting there, how to conduct themselves, how to saluam and how to behave generally.

Q. In that case you do not advocate scholarships to be given to any of them to go abroad.

A. No, not yet. It is not to the point. Let us begin at the bottom. We have not yet even begun to take it seriously. Your scheme requires a large outlay of rupees. I say make the best of the material available to-day and much can be done. I hope Government will not give so much money to be wasted. What can be done without wasting a single penny is first to have a very strict Board of Censors on the present producers. Those people should not be allowed to produce such objectionable films. The whole general morale must be changed and you can do that without incurring any extra expenditure. You do not want the proficiency of Hollywood to-day. That involves a lot of money unnecessarily.

Q. The Board of Censors, you have just said, is not working satisfactorily. Would you like to have a lady on the Board?

A. I should like to have people who are culturally interested and artistic, whoever they are.

Q. You are interested. If the Government were to ask you?

A. I do not think I should say 'No' if I can be of any service certainly.

Q. I want to ask you whether you would like to have a lady?

A. I do not mind who it is but a lady could help a great deal.

Q. A lady would be better able to give some good advice?



A. I am quite sure. Yes, I can myself give some biographies of noble Queens and great women and conduct the show myself. Certainly I can make up a better show myself.

Mr. Green: The censors do not make up the story but judge the story when it is produced.

A. I really don't know how they do it. But the difficulty seems to be to produce a good film to-day in India. That is where the whole trouble lies. Anything is done anyhow on the spur of the moment. How often I have seen them take away our furniture and things from our house, being an Indian house, and I have told them "don't you see the setting is overpainted it does not do for that particular piece?" and they are always warding off the essential because they have no sense of Art and Aestheticism.

Sir Haroon Jaffer: Have you visited cinemas where Indian films are shown?

A. I am speaking of Indian studios now.

Q. Have you visited cinema shows of that kind where Indian films are shown?

A. Yes, yes.

Q. You have seen in the audience very few Mussulmans taking advantage of this kind of pleasure. What is the reason? For instance, we have just been to see the film "Tainted Virtue" and found very few Mussulmans at it.

Chairman: I saw a letter to-day from a Maulvi which I asked to be circulated. It seems it is against their religion.

A. If it comes to that all such things are against religion, so far as *purdah* and all that is concerned. But, nobody sticks to it, and it is no use speaking of religion these days. If it comes to that, illiteracy among Mussulman ladies is the worst when Islam has placed woman on such a high pedestal.

Q. Is it due to the titles? They cannot understand the titles?

A. I don't know about that but very probably yes.

Q. Have you seen any titles in Urdu on the screen?

A. I have seen the same horrible titles translated into Urdu also.

Q. I have not seen them in Urdu here.

A. But is that of any importance.

Q. I mean in order to attract Mussulman audiences.

A. I do not think the present titles ought to be very attractive and if they are not attracted, I am very glad because they cannot see anything good.

Mr. Coatman: Only one question. I saw that advertisement. Do you regard those figures as indecent?

A. The whole thing is indecent. Figures, title, everything.

Q. I mean these particular figures?

A. But why this title and not any other? There is no choice. All Indian films display more or less indecent matter.

Q. And the suggestion is, anybody going to the film will see that sort of thing?

A. It follows.

Q. I thoroughly agree. I think it is disgusting the way in which some of these films are advertised. And you would extend the system of censorship to newspaper advertisements and to posters also?

A. Certainly as soon as the film is censored properly, it follows that every word is also censored.

Colonel Crawford: You say you have been more abroad than in India?

A. I am afraid I was born abroad.

Q. In England?

A. No, in Constantinople.

Q. Have you been a good deal in England?

A. I have been.

Q. You made a point interesting to me when you said it was your very distinct impression that a larger proportion of demoralising films and a lower stamp of film—that is Western films—are generally shown in India than in England?

A. I speak of European films generally. It is a fact.

Q. Do a larger proportion of the lower class films find an opening in the Indian market? Is that your impression? It is rather my impression too.

A. Yes.

Q. You think the moral tone of Western films is on the whole objectionable even for European races? I am not talking of anybody in particular?

A. They might be better.

Q. You alluded to some particular types of scenes?

A. Yes, I don't think they are necessary and they must be avoided and not emphasized as they are.

Q. Are you a member of any social association in Bombay? You spoke of doing a lot of writing and speaking?

A. My special line is education and Indian music.

Q. But you are not a member of any particular social organisation?

A. Well, I do belong to all these social things but I hardly go to them though I am connected with them.

Q. I also gather that you are definitely of opinion that Indians should set up their own standards of censorship. Some witnesses said they would prefer British standards?

A. I think ultimately we are all agreed on that point. The whole level must be raised; whether under British or Indian censorship it's the same thing.

Q. You spoke of a better atmosphere?

A. That is it. The whole atmosphere must change, the whole level must change altogether.

Q. You spoke of the necessity for a better atmosphere in the studios. From your worldwide experience do you think the atmosphere on the stage and in the film studios in the West is not very high?

A. Perhaps not.

Q. I mean the same objections apply in the West against parents allowing their children to go on the stage.

A. There it is. It must be avoided.

Q. But at the same time you feel that artistically you can use the available material in the production of good films.

A. Even this bad material can be used to the best advantage if conducted and managed by the right people.

Q. Their moral life is not a question we need enter into?

A. If we try to raise the whole atmosphere into a healthier one, it is bound to have a good effect all round.

Q. If you are producing a higher tone of pictures you will have a higher type of person coming in?

A. It follows.

Q. I understand you are an artist in a way. Are you for freedom of artistic expression? Would you as an artist want to take any subject with a view to displaying it on the film?

A. I could guide others.

*Q.* I understand that freedom of the choice of the subjects is necessary for artistic purposes. Would you go as far as that? Would you take any subject and treat it on the film?

*A.* Yes, so far as it is artistic. It depends upon what subject it is.

*Q.* Artists cover a lot of ground, and it is being constantly insisted upon that sex relationship must form the basis of most of the serials?

*A.* Of course, but it has got to be decent; it has got to be treated in a correct manner with right behaviour.

*Chairman:* The point Colonel Crawford wants to know is, would the artist allow himself or herself to be subjected to control in dealing with the subject?

*A.* Of course, he or she would have to be controlled, absolutely.

*Colonel Crawford:* You say that the cinema has proved to be of tremendous educative value. In view of that statement, do you think all Governments in the world would be wise in getting some measure of control over the cinemas?

*A.* Yes. I should advise all Governments to do what Japan and Germany are doing. I found in Germany a beautiful house with five flats. I was taken there and I saw they were producing something like six shows a day. It was a tremendous concern. All the shows were of educative value. It was the most extraordinary place I had ever been to. That was conducted by Government, and it was compulsory to show the films in all centres of instruction.

*Q.* The Government themselves in Germany are concerned with the production of educational films and it is compulsory system to show these films in all the schools and other social institutions, is that what you mean?

*A.* Yes. I did not stay there long enough to conduct any myself—but the shows were extremely interesting all round.

*Q.* Those films were produced in the nature of a story for educational purposes?

*A.* Yes, and that is the kind of thing, I think, that should be followed here also.

*Q.* You talk of Indian productions. Have you seen "Sacrifice"?

*A.* Yes, but first of all I don't like the story. I don't want to be personal as all concerned in it are my friends. Frankly speaking, it is very badly produced, it is appalling in all its details.

*Q.* I thought that it was a good picture?

*A.* Even "The Light of Asia", with all its defects, was perhaps a little better than "Sacrifice".

*Q.* So your objection to the story is that it shows a bad character and not a good character?

*A.* No. Not at all. At the very start, the story is not attractive enough, and then it is badly produced, though it ought to have been an improvement over others considering educated and a better class of people were concerned with it. It ought certainly to have been a decided improvement upon the old methods. It was however a very good sequel to Miss Mayo's book. I hope she will write something about the Muhammadans also. If she does not, I should like to write something about them, exposing them as she has exposed the Hindus.

*Chairman:* Do you like the political part of it?

*A.* It is all mixed up. Political, religious, social, national, it is all the same thing.

*Q.* Do you think it is the hand of a friend?

*A.* I hope she will do us good, she certainly is India's best friend.

*Mr. Green:* Although I have not seen you before, I have heard of your artistic endeavours. You have denounced most of the films, but have you seen films, apart from educational films, which you can commend to us as being free

from objections? I mean a film which has satisfied you from an artistic point of view?

A. I saw several films in America when I was there in 1918. There were a series of excellent films at Hollywood, and they produced biblical stories marvellously and with great academic and technical precision.

Q. Have you seen "Ben Hur"?

A. Yes. It was good.

Q. Because you have made some sweeping denunciations I am trying to find out what your standard is?

A. I will tell you one thing. Western films as a rule are much better in technique.

Q. I am referring to the moral aspect?

A. I am afraid the western films, even the best films, cannot avoid these extraordinary gushing love scenes. That is a thing which is unnecessarily and needlessly emphasized and seems inevitable, and such scenes ought to be eliminated and moderated.

Q. You think that such films are absolutely bad?

A. Not altogether. The rest of the film is all right, but that particular portion should not be shown here anyhow.

*Chairman:* You mean, kissing, embracing and all that?

A. Yes, all that part can be eliminated. I don't think even high class English ladies like all that. Yesterday an English lady told me, speaking of these manifestations, that to her it was horrible and extreme bad taste and she agreed with me.

Q. Do they like it in England?

A. I don't think so. I don't really believe that anybody likes to see such things.

Q. You think in fact there are very good films, but they are all spoiled in some measure by an undue insistence on the less desirable side of life?

A. Yes. If those little incidents could be modulated, then the films could be shown to advantage in India and even in Europe; finally India could produce the finest films with the rich materials that she has if adequate opportunities and facilities were provided.

*Chairman:* Thank you, Mrs. Atya Begam.

### **Written Statement of Khan Saheb A. M. MANSURI, M.L.C., Ahmedabad, dated 3rd November 1927.**

1. I have no special knowledge or connection with the cinematograph industry.

2. (a) 30 per cent. educated and 70 per cent. illiterate classes frequent the cinema. This refers to Ahmedabad.

(b) Audience is mixed. Mill hands form the majority.

(c) 20 per cent. of the audience consist of children under fourteen years of age.

3. Indian films are favourite with the people, e.g., "Shirin Farhad".

4.5. No.

(a) Not like English.

(b) Yes.

(c) It is profitable to show western films.

6. Yes.

7. No.

8. Not satisfactory. Economic conditions are not favourable.
9. No. Demand is greater than supply. Yes. There is tendency to the monopoly of supply or exhibition of films.
10. No.
11. No, there should be more copies of the film.
12. No.
13. Loss to the extent of duty lend.
14. Yes. If properly connected with the story.
15. Yes.
16. No. Money stringency.
17. Very few and not up to the mark.
18. No.
19. Not favourably.
20. No.
21. Yes.
24. (a), (b), (d), (e) Yes.
25. Yes.
26. (a) Yes.
- (b) None.
27. No.
28. (a), (b) Yes.
29. No.
30. Below 14 years.
31. (a) Yes.
32. Yes.
33. (a), (b), (c) No.
35. (a), (b) Yes.
36. (a) No.
- (b) Yes.
37. (a) No.
- (b) Yes.
38. Yes.
- 40-41. No.
42. (a) Yes.
- (b) To prevent the import of undesirable films.
44. They could help a good deal.
45. (a) Essential.
- (b) Yes.

**Oral Evidence of Khan Saheb A. M. MANSURI, M.L.C., of Ahmedabad, on Tuesday, the 15th November 1927.**

*Chairman :* You come from Ahmedabad, Khan Saheb?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. What is the population of Ahmedabad?

A. It is about 2 lakhs and 70,000. It is a fairly big town.

Q. How many cinema theatres are there in Ahmedabad?

A. I think there are four. They are all in the Indian quarters.

Q. Do you go to them often?

A. I do go to them, but not very often.

Q. How often in the year do you go?

A. Three or four times in the year.

Q. What are the pictures that are mainly shown in the theatres in the Indian quarters?

A. They are all mixed.

Q. I suppose every theatre there runs both western and Indian films?

A. I think so.

Q. You are not definite about it?

A. I know the system in Bombay is quite different, but in Ahmedabad it is a mixture and both Indian and English films are shown in some theatres.

Q. Is there any film industry in your district or are any films made in your district?

A. No.

Q. Is it true that the Muhammadan religion prohibits Mussulmans from going to the cinema shows? We had a letter from a Maulvi to-day about it.

A. I do not exactly agree with him there.

Q. Do the Mussulmans visit the cinema shows in your town?

A. Yes, they form the bulk of the visitors in Ahmedabad, and they do go; but most of them are mill hands.

Q. How long have these theatres been in existence in Ahmedabad?

A. I think they have been in existence there for the last ten years.

Q. Are they all controlled by the same agency or do they belong to different people?

A. They belong to different people.

Q. Who are the proprietors?

A. They are Parsis in two cases and one theatre belongs to a Muhammadan gentleman.

Q. Have Madans got any theatres there?

A. They visit there occasionally, they have no permanent theatre; they do not own any theatre there.

Q. Do you know how the exhibitors in Ahmedabad get their supplies?

A. They get their supplies from Bombay.

Q. Why do you say here there is a tendency to monopoly of the supply of films? On what do you base that statement?

A. People who get hold of certain good films do not allow them to go to their competitors.

Q. Do you say that on mere inference or have you any relation or connection with the trade?

A. No, but from my inquiries I came to know that.

Q. In whose hands does the monopoly lie?

A. I am talking of the cinema exhibitors. When one of them gets hold of a good film, he generally sees that that film does not go to the other exhibitor.

Q. If they get one film, they won't allow it to be shown in the other theatre at the same time?

A. Yes.

Q. That is not monopoly.

A. It is monopoly to a certain extent.

Q. Have you seen any cinema shows in the Bombay city?

A. No.

Q. I suppose you do not know any of the producing companies here?

A. No.

*Mr. Green:* You are an elected member of the Bombay Legislative Council?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you any experience of the present working of the Bombay Censorship Board or are your replies to our questionnaire based on *a priori* grounds?

A. From what I know I can say that the present censorship, in so far as it relates to Bombay, is all right, but the constitution of the Board is not satisfactory; it is not truly representative.

Q. Representative of what?

A. Representative of the people.

Q. Do you know that it consists of certain Government officers appointed *ex-officio* and a representative of the Hindu, Parsi and Muhammadan communities?

A. Yes.

Q. I suppose you prefer them to be elected?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you any idea as to what the electorate should be?

A. One should be elected by the military people, one by the European Chamber of Commerce, one by the Indian Chambers, and a fourth should be elected by the Bombay Corporation, and Government might nominate one or two interests or bodies or associations or communities which remain unrepresented by such elections. But I would not like to have a Censorship Board with the Police Commissioner at its head, because I understand the members are absolutely silent and dumb and they don't raise their heads. This is my opinion.

Q. From your written replies, I gather that you are generally satisfied with the censorship?

A. I am certainly satisfied with its work, but I am not satisfied with its constitution. I say the Board should be elected.

Q. Having got a larger body such as you suggest, are the members themselves to examine the films or should it be left to a paid officer?

A. I don't think members would be able to sacrifice so much time. It is very difficult to expect them to do so.

**Written Statement of Mr. A. SOARES, M.A., LL.B., Principal, Antonio De Souza High School, Byculla, Bombay, dated the 9th November 1927.**

#### INTRODUCTORY.

1. I have no special knowledge of or connection with the Cinematograph industry. My interest therein is two-fold. As an educationist, I am keenly interested in the social and educational aspects of the film industry. As an Indian, I am greatly concerned with the development of a new industry which may go some little way to relieve the great poverty of India and open a new avenue of lucrative employment to her educated children.

#### GENERAL.

2. (a) I have an impression from personal experience that, at least in Bombay, Indians both of educated and illiterate classes do increasingly frequent cinemas. My experience is confined to Bombay, but I gather that this is the case in all towns in India. So far as the Indian villages are concerned, they are still a virgin soil from the cinema point of view. The increase in attendance may also be deduced from the number of new cinemas that have sprung up within the last few years, while I do not remember of a single cinema having closed down in Bombay in the same period.

(b) The composition of cinema audiences in Bombay naturally varies with the locality. Cinemas in the Fort area are frequented by Europeans and the richer and more educated classes of Indians. The Girgaum and Grant Road Cinemas get a mixed audience, both of educated and illiterate people, practically all Indians—barring the Royal Opera House. The Parel Cinemas are mainly frequented by mill-hands and working people. The number of women in the cinemas patronised by Europeans, Parsis and Christians is in a fair proportion to that of men. Their number is considerably smaller when the bulk of the audience consists of Hindus or Muhamadans. But an increasingly larger number of women mill-workers attend the pictures.

(c) I have no definite data to arrive at an estimate of the proportion of the audience consisting of children or impressionable adolescents. My impression is that the number of smaller children is a very small percentage of the audience, except on festival days, when whole families flock to the pictures as a winding up of the day's enjoyment. But the number of adolescents who attend with or without their elders is, I think, a goodly proportion of the whole—perhaps as much as one third or more of the total.

## PART 1.

### *Film Industry in India.*

3. The cinemas in India may roughly be divided into those which exhibit exclusively foreign films, mainly American, and those which almost exclusively show Indian-made pictures. The former are attended by Europeans and the more westernised Indians. The bulk of Indian audiences, specially the illiterate classes, show a strong preference for Indian films. Of the latter those depicting Hindu religious episodes, specially from the life of Krishna, and myths, at one time were very popular. But I am assured that they are not such a good draw now-a-days, except on appropriate festivals. The reason probably is that the people have had a surfeit of these films and monotony is likely to pall. Stories from the great Indian epics and lives of Indian heroes, like Shivaji, also seem to attract bumper audiences, mainly of Hindus. A number of pictures deal with social problems and get quite an encouraging response.

So far as the foreign films go, comic films—with stars like Charlie Chaplin and Harold Lloyd—are prime favourites with all kinds of audiences; but these films being rather expensive, they are only exhibited in Cinemas which cater to the needs of the better—I mean wealthier—class of people. Educated Indians are apt to flock in numbers to see the film versions of their favourite books. "Quo Vadis," "The Three Musketeers," "Les Misérables," "The Last Days of Pompeii," and such other popular film versions are sure of drawing large crowds. The illiterate classes of the people seem to have a great liking for those interminable serials, full of episodes of rough riding, reckless daring, and hair-breadth escapes. It is a curious thing that certain cinemas in localities where the rougher elements of the city congregate, exhibit this sort of films right through the year—a clear sign that they are very popular and strongly appeal to the mentality of their patrons.

It may seem surprising, but I have an impression—an impression confirmed by some people connected with cinemas—that mere love dramas or sex films are not such a good draw as might have been presumed. This speaks well for the good sense and good taste of Bombay audiences as a whole; though I am afraid that much too great a proportion of the people attending such pictures is made up of what may be called "impressionable adolescents".

4. I am afraid the exhibitors are not catering adequately for Indian audiences. I really think that Indian audiences should like to see foreign films with more stuff in them. The appeal of the usual American film is merely sensuous, if not sensual. There is hardly any plot or even characterisation. The reason why the exhibitors get no better films, probably is that



most of the films made are of that type, and the exhibitors have no choice in the matter. As such films are made mainly for the American or European taste, they certainly are a reflection on the good taste of the West.

I also think that many Europeans as well as westernised Indians would have escaped from such films to Indian-made pictures, but the cinemas which they frequent, never put on the screen any Indian film. The reason probably is that the Indian film is technically inferior, and the exhibitors are afraid of losing caste as it were, by exhibiting any such films. But I really think they might take their courage in their hand and make a start, say with a picture like Tagore's "Sacrifice," and see how the audience takes it.

5. Indian produced films, depicting Indian subjects, are available. In Bombay itself there are several studios concentrating on such subjects. Yet so large is the demand for Indian films in Indian cinemas that the demand exceeds supply. I have been assured by a manager of an Indian cinema that he is often compelled to keep a film running for two weeks and more, even though its attraction is nearly exhausted, merely because of the difficulty in getting suitable films week after week.

(a) I have seen only a few, and their quality varied. But most of the films, I daresay, will be found technically defective—and from the spectacular point of view can hardly stand on a level with the Western films. There is a good deal of over-acting which does not much appeal to a cultured taste. *Faute de mieux*, they seem to be appreciated by Indian audiences.

(b) Indian films—whatever their quality—are certainly popular. They cater for an audience which is not touched by the better class of cinemas which are beyond the means of the working classes. Their subjects appeal strongly to the new sense of pride in India's past which is a feature of Indian nationalism. This is one of the reasons, to my mind, why an educated Indian prefers even its crudities to the spectacular perfections of Western films. Apart from that, the religious films necessarily appeal to the deep religious instincts of the people.

(c) Whether an Indian film is more profitable than a Western film will depend partly on the quality of the film, but mainly on the type of the audience. In purely Indian quarters in Bombay it would appear that Indian scenes are more popular, and there are cinemas which have given up showing foreign films in favour of the indigenous. It stands to reason they would not have made the change if it did not pay.

6. (a) I have already answered this affirmatively. It is, I submit, no longer a matter of opinion, but a matter of fact.

(b) The educated classes would certainly prefer films dealing with India's heroic or epic past. Also problem-films, dealing powerfully with modern social or political problems. They would also welcome film versions of the literary master-pieces which would lend themselves to graphic treatment.

The illiterate classes, I think, would prefer religious films, the often romantic stories of their gods and goddesses. They also show a fondness for films of swift movement and derring-do. Laughter creating films would be welcome to all.

8. (a) I am certainly not satisfied with the present condition of the film industry in India, so far as production is concerned. If care is taken of production, distribution and exhibition will take care of themselves.

(b) My impression is that the industry is still in its infant stage. The two essential things for a flourishing film industry are:—money and men. At present the industry is in the hands of people whose capital is inadequate for a large scale or expensive production. There is also a considerable difficulty in getting good actors, actresses and scenario writers, as the educated classes are still fighting shy of the industry.

If India is to produce films which are to rival foreign ones in artistic production and gorgeous setting—and unless a goodly number of such films are made, there is little chance of Indian films being thrown on the screens of the world.—the great capitalists of India must interest themselves in the

industry. The Tatas who in so many ways have been pioneer industrialists, might turn their attention to this rising industry. There is plenty of capital in India which seeks profitable investment and may be tapped by men whose honesty and business ability inspire confidence. The bursting of the post-war bubbles have greatly shaken the confidence of the Indian investor, but if an attractive and well-studied scheme was placed before the public, I think money would be forthcoming. To my mind there is no doubt that a properly organised film industry has a great future in India. Apart from the domestic demand which grows larger every day, there is likely to be a great demand from over-seas, specially America. Both here and in Europe there is now-a-days growing a keen interest in things oriental. The customs of the people, their religion, history, and art are greedily studied. The more exotic it is, the wider is the appeal. India and China are in this respect the only two countries which have elements to quench this thirst for the antique and the exotic. Good Indian films will fetch big prices elsewhere, and considering that the Indian actors and actresses—film stars—may be had at salaries which are as nothing compared to those of their American or European *confères*, I think there is very good money in this business. I am only putting forward the argument of rupees, annas, pias, as it is the only one which is likely to appeal to the capitalistic mentality. But there are other arguments of no less weight, such as the dissemination of wider and deeper knowledge of India in the world, a knowledge which will increase the world's respect and admiration for India.

If one of the results of this Committee's labours should be to draw the attention of Indian capital to the industry, then the Committee would have justified its appointment. The Indian princes too might turn their attention to this business. Their co-operation would be very effective in one respect. They could supply many of the trappings and expensive settings to the scenes at little or no cost, thus keeping down the expenses considerably and adding to the spectacular side of the film.

The next difficulty is of the personnel. Capable producers, directors, actors, actresses, and scenario writers are at present comparatively rare. I am given to understand that some of the directors have been to Germany, America, and other countries to study the technique of the production, and some of the Indian films do show that these men know the tricks of the trade. If these have gone, others may go or be sent by the producers in order to perfect their technique. Any money thus spent is a solid investment which will repay itself a hundredfold. The only thing is that care should be taken to send men who show a certain amount of resource and ability and who have served their apprenticeship in film industry of the country.

If no better actors, actresses, and scenario writers are to be seen on the screen, the fault lies partly with the producers who do not show much enterprise in discovering new talent. In colleges, schools, and private and public theatricals one can easily spot a number of promising young men and women who with some training could turn out decent work. As things are, a large number of actors and actresses are uneducated, and very few there are highly educated. How can any one expect such people to revitalise India's dead past and reconstruct its ancient history and civilisation? I am afraid educated people know little of the film industry in India, and what little they know, does not inspire their confidence—I mean some little scandal or court case which occasionally crops up in the newspapers. But if big companies with large capital and responsible directors were formed, capable actors and scenario writers would be forthcoming without difficulty—a handsome salary and fame to boot being the strongest possible magnets. The big companies could also at first get capable foreign directors to show the way and to train the new recruits. Such foreign help would no doubt be expensive, but would only be temporary, and in the long run very remunerative. But all this cannot be done by the present small studios with their small capital.

The greatest difficulty of them all is—actresses. As things are, hardly a self-respecting woman will take to the films without losing her reputation.

So either the female parts are acted by men or by uneducated and half-educated women who have not much reputation to lose. To ask decent and well bred women to consort with them is to ask for the impracticable. The Indian mind is very conservative and will not—quite rightly too—allow their women-folk to be exposed to moral danger and contamination. The stories one hears of the life at Los Angeles are not such as to reassure the public mind. Under the circumstances, the first necessity is a sense of security that the actresses will be duly protected—and that can only come from the establishment of responsible agencies or studios. Meanwhile, suitable men might take the parts of women—it is to a great extent a matter of make up,—and the danger of discovery is much smaller than on the stage, since pictures are a dumb show.

12. The Entertainment Tax has been in Bombay for some years now, but has not apparently checked the flow of cinema patronage. The cinema managers will no doubt tearfully unfold a different tale—but it is their business.

13. The present customs tariff on foreign films may be taken *pro tanto* to afford some protection to the rising Indian industry. But I am against raising any tariff wall against imported films, (1) because the Indian films will and must if properly organised, make a strong bid for the world's market, and any high tariff might provoke retaliation, (2) because, as things are at present, the Indian films have a ready and exclusive market in India irrespective of any protection, (3) because to a very great extent there is no competition between foreign and Indian films which appeal to different kinds of exhibitors and audiences, and (4) because, what is wanted is higher standards of production, and protection has a tendency to perpetuate inefficiency and slovenliness, unless there is a very keen and strong internal competition. But it is useless to talk of additional protection and to trot out the usual arguments for infant industries, when actually in the home market demand exceeds supply.

As for the question of lowering duties on materials used in film industry, it may be left for the Tariff Board to investigate, if and when the Indian producer applies to Government for protection. Unless there is great necessity, I would not sacrifice any Government revenue which may be used to give effective help to industry in a different way.

14. The Indian studios, I fear, will not easily take to educational and propaganda films, unless a demand is assured from Government or other agencies. Even then it may be difficult for them to get the expert knowledge necessary to produce really useful films, for which there is ample room in India.

My suggestion is that Government of India should create an agency of its own to produce films with a well organised studio. This studio would (1) produce films for education and propaganda, (2) produce model or standard films on Indian topics and subjects, which might set a tone to the other studios, (3) train up directors, actors, actresses, and scenario writers to be absorbed in private industry. This I consider to be the best way to help the industry. It is a positive way, not merely negative as raising the tariff. Nor will private industry have reason to complain of unfair competition if the films produced by the agency are sold at competitive rates. So far as educative films are concerned, there will be no real competition between private and state industry. As a rule, the field is neglected by private studios. So far as model films are produced, they will be produced partly at least as a means of training the personnel of film industry which can later be absorbed by private industry to its great improvement. The private studios could send their own directors, etc., to be trained there. Again a responsible Government agency would attract a larger number of educated men and women, and thus solve the problem of an adequate supply of trained artists.

15. I think that an Indian film industry has a great future. The country contains in its varied and wondrous scenery a natural background or

setting for its pictures. In its religions, literature, art, history, and types of people with their picturesque customs and costumes, we have a rich and almost inexhaustible fund to be drawn upon for splendid films. Capital too is not lacking, nor capitalists with sufficient enterprise and resourcefulness. Bombay as usual may be expected to take the lead in this matter. Artists with imagination and histrionic and mimic power are not wanting. They will be coming in floods, as soon as it is found that the industry can offer an attractive opening. Why, Bengal itself may, if properly tapped, supply all the needs of India. In India itself there is a great demand for Indian films—a demand which is likely to increase if better films are produced. Above all there is the world market which will be captured without much difficulty, as Indian films will be *sui generis* and able to satisfy the foreign thirst for knowledge of the East.

16 and 17. I have dealt with these points in previous answers.

19. I have no figures to judge the relative cost of production. But so far as the salaries of the artists and directors form a heavy percentage of the total cost, the Indian cost will be considerably lower. In her natural scenery and old world monuments and cities, India has a natural setting which other countries have to reproduce artificially at considerable cost. The actors' trappings and dresses are plainer and simpler in India and must cost relatively less money than in countries where changes of fashions involve, I daresay, considerable expenses to the producer.

20. (a) The state agency for film-production, suggested in No. 14 above will no doubt involve Government in considerable expense, running into lakhs of rupees. I am not in a position to give any approximate estimate. But if the suggestion is found feasible, the estimates can be worked out by experts without much difficulty.

Such expenditure is justifiable from the point of view of general Indian progress, and may be put down as part of nation-building expenditure. The educational films, if effective, will on the one hand—*e.g.*, agriculture—increase the wealth of the country and necessarily its taxable capacity; and on the other hand—*e.g.*, sanitation and public health—lessen the heavy Governmental and Municipal expenditure on this head, besides contributing to the physical fitness of the people and consequently their working capacity. The films made for the use of schools will be a good hand-maiden to the *vica vice* school teaching, combining, as they do, usefulness and pleasure.

Then the help given to an industry which is capable of considerable expansion will be the means of opening a new source of employment to the educated and even illiterate people of the country. Considering the narrow field there is for employment and the growing difficulties which educated men find in getting a job, however humble, any new industry which has a chance of making good should receive encouragement at the hands of Government.

(b) I should say that such a studio should, if properly managed, be self-supporting. The educational and propaganda films would be readily absorbed by Provincial Governments, Municipalities and district boards and social work institutions. All the more important schools might be encouraged to purchase small cinema apparatus for projection, or Government might have special cinema performances (*matinées*) for children, from which decent returns might be derived. Circulars from Directors of Public Instruction addressed to Headmasters, apprising them of the educational value of such performances would, I think, meet with good response.

In the second place, any really good films produced would be taken over by the local cinemas at competition rates, and, if the foreign market is tapped, may fetch big prices. The cost of producing such pictures may be less for Government than for private agencies. For as the studio is to be used as a training school, most of the actors and actresses would be recruited from among the students themselves and will be got at a small remuneration, if not free of charge.

(b) The main expenditure will be capital expenditure for the fitting up of a good studio. This might be met by a loan to be gradually paid off out of profits of the studio.

The local Governments might be asked to contribute a certain fixed sum annually out of any Entertainment or Amusement Tax they may be levying, and those Governments which are not actually levying any such tax, might be induced to consider the advisability of imposing this tax.

Later on, when strong private companies have been formed to produce films of a standard quality, Government could wind up its own agency and pass the concern to any of these companies for valuable consideration. The idea is not that Government should enter into competition with private agencies, but that it should enter the field to give an initial impulse and help to consolidate the industry.

21. Though I am in favour of a State agency during the initial period and for a definite purpose, I am against a State monopoly. A State monopoly in any art is unthinkable. It will standardise and reduce art to routine. Apart from this fundamental evil, Indian Governments have enough work in their hand without troubling themselves with the huge business management of an all-India Film Producer. Monopoly by destroying all competition tends to inefficiency and waste of money, and this waste is a greater danger in Government agencies which have the tax-payers' money to fall back upon. There is no such urge to cut down all superfluous expenditure as in private firms. Anyhow, with all its plausible advantages, a Government monopoly is not practical politics, and even if it were, it would have to be fought out by all who care for the growth of any art, free from the shackles of officialism.

#### *Films of the British Commonwealth.*

22. The question of Imperial preference must primarily be looked at from the point of view of Indian interests. A poor country like India cannot afford to be generous at her own cost. Charity must begin at home. If this can be done without sacrificing the interests of our film industry, I have no objection.

(a) I do not see how Imperial Preference would assist the development of the Indian film industry. The Indian film industry cannot hope to compete with foreign films of the type that are usually produced in the Empire or elsewhere. Her films will be distinctive and unique, and will be accepted because of these factors, because they are different from the Western films. They are in a class apart, and, if good enough, will be paid for and exhibited in the Empire, preference or no preference. The popularity of Indian films will not depend on the greater or less customs duties, but on their inherent interest. While, therefore, Indian films will gain nothing by any preferential treatment that may be given by the Empire, they may lose something, (1) by Empire films being given preferential treatment and thus increasing internal competition, and (2) by foreign nations retaliating in case of any unfair differentiation. As I believe that America and the Continent of Europe are likely to be our biggest customers, Government should be very chary to rouse their hostility by any manipulation of the tariff.

(b) It would be a great gain if India were better known and better respected in the Empire. A kaleidoscope of India's old glories and present beauty and resources would certainly cause a great impression. After seeing films of this kind, an Afrikaner, for instance, would think twice before offending Indian susceptibilities or looking down upon India as a nation of coolies. But this will be done only if really good films are produced in India and are brought to the notice of the exhibitors in the Empire. Imperial preference can do very little in the matter.

(c) It is quite possible that the standard—specially moral standard—of Western films shown in India would be improved by Empire films being screened in preference to the ordinary American film. But this is a matter for the censor, not for the customs officer. For a tariff hits all films blindly,

the good as well as the bad. What is wanted is a discrimination between the good film and the bad, and tariffs cannot do that. An American film would be penalised, not because it is a bad film, but because it is American. A premium would be set on an Empire film, not because it is good, but because it is Imperial. And what would happen if, because of tariff manipulations, worthless Empire films were dumped upon India?

23. Since India is and is likely to remain a part of the Empire, it would be a good thing if there was an interchange of useful knowledge regarding their mutual resources, conditions, and activities. Much of that knowledge might even be commercially or industrially profitable. Such films could be preferentially treated, so far as customs dues go. I would suggest that such films might be labelled "educational" by the respective Governments and be admitted either free of duties or at smaller rates. To this extent preference may be admitted and may do some good.

## PART II.

### *Social Aspects and Control.*

24. A good many films exhibited in India are bound to do harm to the public. This is specially the case with 'sex' films and 'crime' films. Of course, not all films wherein 'sex' and 'crime' are important elements are injurious. On the contrary they may be thoroughly moral. It is the attitude of the producer and the way the subject is treated that make a film objectionable or otherwise. If vice is gilded or treated as fun, and virtue is on the whole made to take the back seat or brought into ridicule, if again crime is in the person of the villain made very attractive, specially to the young, adventurous hearts, such films are a public danger. A number of films, though not wholly sex-ridden, have often purple patches which are very suggestive and meant to appeal to the lower passions of man.

I do not think there is a large circulation of films which may be called outright immoral or criminally suggestive. But the bulk of the Western films with which I am more acquainted, can have no uplifting effect on the audience. I know that people do not go to the cinemas for edification, but for amusement. My point is that they can certainly be amused and yet their moral values not lowered. Almost all the comic films give one plenty of laughter and amusement and no moral harm is done to young and old. Film versions of the best books in the literature of the world would combine amusement with profit. But some of the versions I have seen were mere travesties of the original, done by vulgarians who seem to think that good taste is very much at discount. Current events, such as are portrayed by Pathé Gazette, are appreciated by all, and if their size and quality and variety were extended, they would be a boon to the cinema patrons.

Both the 'sex' and 'crime' films are harmful. They may not do any harm to staid, self-controlled men, who take these things at their worth. But it is the young and the impressionable that are in danger. The sex films rouse his sensuality and may drive him to vice as a vent of feelings so roused. The atmosphere so created is electric and the audience responds automatically. The young folk in the audience—well, one can see the effect on the spot, the way they act towards one another.

Crime films may be harmful in two ways. To the criminally minded they teach new ways, swifter and subtler methods, first of committing the crime and then of avoiding arrest. They also bring before him the new weapons placed in the hands of the criminal by our scientific civilisation. To the young, full of life and spirit of adventure, they also have a subtle appeal, specially if the villain is drawn in vivid colours, and made to possess all the virtues which attract the young—daring, courage, resourcefulness.

I must say, however, that criminally suggestive films are much rarer than the other kind, I mean sex-ridden films.

What proportion of crime is due to the cinemas, is a difficult problem. We have no young rascallions here, practising introspection and psycho-analysis, who edify the courts, as in America, by describing the genesis of their criminality and often tracing it to the highly coloured movies. But there are certain crimes which have features reminding one of the films, and it is perhaps not too much to deduce that films might be at the root of the mischief. When for instance, a young Christian in a northern town, comes up in a car in broad day-light and carries off a school mistress before the eyes of the startled children and ravishes her in a cave—in other words when he behaves like a caveman of the films, the inference seems clear. Here in Bombay we had a Chasmavalla, whose exploits and escapes would certainly make a stirring film. There was some years ago a murder on board a moving train carried off by a couple of educated young men, which also seemed like a child of the movies. Of course, I do not mean to say that it is the cinema which put them in mind of their crimes, but the methods adopted were suggestive of the cinema. For the rest, human nature is fundamentally the same all over the world, and like causes will yield like results. If harm has come to the youth of the West from the abuse or misuse of the cinema—and this can hardly be denied—even greater harm will befall our own youth who are more ingenuous and less sophisticated.

Hence the necessity of a stricter censorship and other devices, calculated to protect our children and young people from the demoralising effects of pictures which stir the evil in them.

20. In a country like India where religious susceptibilities are easily offended and religious passions are easily inflamed, great care should be taken to pass films which are likely to cause bad blood. Of course the censor's position is very invidious. For there are so many sects and classes that even a good film may be a source of offence. Now-a-days a number of films are produced with a distinctly reforming bias, films which may be gall and wormwood to the orthodox. Should this be a reason for the banning of the film? A film like Tagore's "Sacrifice" is distinctly revolutionary in conception and one which may be held offensive of Brahminism. Was the censor to forbid it?

I suggest that only such films may be proscribed which tend to bring into contempt the gods, prophets or religious leaders venerated by large classes of the people. As for the films used for propaganda of new ideas, even though they go counter to established creeds, no ban may be placed over them, unless the treatment is such as is bound to rouse considerable heat and passion.

The distinction must be kept carefully in mind, for in a country where social customs and even hygienic rules are given the sanction of religion, any innocent film may raise an outcry from some quarter or other. I consider good films—good in the sense of artistic and well balanced—are strong weapons in the armoury of the social reformer, and it would be a pity if this weapon was broken in his hand by Governmental interference.

27. (a) I should say that a very large number of films shown in India are a caricature of Western civilisation. They are those half truths which are worse than lies. The whole of India is outraged by the picture of India given in Miss Mayo's notorious book. I daresay any true European or American would be outraged at the picture of the European civilisation given in the ordinary films. If these were typical of Western life, then this civilisation might be summed up in two words:—lust and luxury. It is no wonder that educated Indians are not impressed by the assumption of superiority of the Western civilisation and are liable to point a finger of scorn at the object lessons of this civilisation thrown on the screen. They are particularly shocked by the over-free life of scarcely clad woman who move in the pictures. Those of us who would like to have an *entente cordiale* between the East and the West, based on mutual respect and understanding, consider these films to be a stumbling block.

Happily as I said, the mass of the Indian people hardly ever have a look at such pictures. They do not frequent the cinemas which screen such films. But a good many educated Indians do see these pictures, and, whether they enjoy them or not, they must come away with a feeling that the boasted civilisation of the West is a hollow mockery. I repeat it again, the uneducated Indian is not effected by these films, and so no undesirable results can follow.

To ban all such films would be a drastic remedy, but, I suppose, any such suggestion would be classed as 'puritanism' and dismissed *in limine*. Anyhow, a stricter censorship would ban the worst specimens, and thus induce the exhibitor to import more decent films in future. And if, as I am afraid, the exhibitor in this country is not a free agent but must accept the bad as well as the good from syndicates controlling production, here is a chance for the Empire to produce films which are good art and good morality, films which are neither low nor degrading, and thus overthrow the tyranny of the American companies. I think the exhibitor in India would only be too glad to give up such outrageous films which he finds are not good draws but which he screens for want of better substitutes.

29. Yes; certain films could be certified *as for adults only*. I know that such a label is in itself an advertisement, but people who go to such films because of their relish for unsavoury episodes are already sufficiently corrupt and are not likely to be demoralised by any daring or *risqué* film.

30. I should certainly have wished to allow children only for children's performances. But I think such a step may involve great hardships. For there are days when the whole family is on the spree, so to say, and wend their way to the cinema. To prevent children is to prevent parents as well, and it is not practicable. But, as a rule, it may be left to the good sense of the parents to take their children to shows which are not likely to offend the young mind. If knowingly they take them to unsuitable shows, the responsibility is their own. But, apart from this, it is certainly a good thing for cinemas to have now and again special children's performances which need not be dull in themselves or uninteresting to the grown up people accompanying them. This would satisfy the children's craving for pictures without any harm accruing to them. And if films of educational interest were also shown, the performance would be doubly satisfactory.

31. Censorship is the only means we have of guarding against bad films. Whether it is effective or not depends on the temper and taste of the censors and the principles, if any, which guide them in their decision.

32. I can only judge by the results—and the results are not satisfactory. Many a film escapes the eyes of the censor, which I should certainly clip, if not ban. I could cite instances, but time and space forbid. I think the Censorship might usefully be tightened in certain directions.

33. A strict censorship would not interfere with the recreations of the people, unless recreation consists in seeing highly suggestive films. By far the great majority of the people frequent the pictures as a relief against the tedium of their work. They do not go there to excite their low passions. If there are a certain number who visit cinemas with that intention, is it fair and right that their morbidity should be catered to, while the good sense of the rest of the audience is offended?

33. (b) Not appreciably. As I have already said, the bulk of cinema patrons do not like such shows. They are not a good draw.

(c) Unduly interfere with the artistic and inspirational development? This is bosh. There is neither art nor inspiration in such pictures. They are gross and vulgar merely. As a matter of fact, such scenes are engrafted artificially and used as mere padding, because in America and Europe, for which countries the films are made, there must be a demand for such things. If the censor were to cut off the scenes, even the film would often gain in unity and artistic ensemble.

34. (a) A single Central Board would be very inconvenient to the trade and might occasion undue delays and greater expense to exhibitors. I am



against any such thing, though I well see that a single Central Board would tend to uniformity and do away with the vagaries of Provincial Boards.

(b) I would not have a Central Board in addition to Provincial Boards, mainly on the ground of economy. It would also be difficult to prevent overlapping and waste of time in such a case. I would rather strengthen considerably the Provincial Boards in Bombay and Calcutta and make them more representative, specially of men with educational experience. Since almost all the foreign films enter either through Bombay or Calcutta, free ingress to all India might be given, if they are passed by either of the two Boards. Similarly most of Indian films, I think, are produced in the same centres and once they are passed by the Boards, either of Calcutta or Bombay, they might be allowed to run all over India. In some special cases the Board may certify the film for Bombay or Calcutta only, in which case the said film would have to be submitted to the Boards elsewhere, before being exhibited. If this plan is adopted, the other Provincial Boards would have little work to do, and their personnel may be reduced to a smaller number. The inconvenience to the trade would also be considerably minimised. As a matter of fact, the Boards of Bombay and Calcutta would have practically the functions and advantages of the suggested Central Board without its inconvenience.

35. (a) Except for the presence of a judge and an experienced police officer or two, the Provincial Boards may be composed entirely of non-officials of a certain standing, among whom a number of educationists may find room.

(b) This appointment of a full-time man with an Advisory Board may also be a good solution, provided a man of really good understanding is available. This may be done, if the Board, as I propose, to be constituted, is likely to cost more. But I would lay down certain general principles as a guidance for the man, with instructions that in all doubtful cases the film should be inspected either by the full Board or by a sub-committee and certified by them.

36. (a) I don't like the present system of subordinate Inspectors doing the work. I don't know whether they have sufficient culture, sense of beauty and art, and good sense to make a sound decision.

(b) If the plan in 35 (b) is adopted, then the difficulty of getting non-officials of standing with sufficient leisure will be got over. If not, a larger number of censors might be appointed and work distributed among them, only such films being referred to joint inspection as are on the shadier side. Such joint inspection is partly to protect the trade against individual vagaries.

40. I would not bother much about hand-bills and advertisements—as this additional work may be too burdensome for the Board; but I would censor posters, some of which, being glaringly exhibited by the roadside, are likely to prove injurious to the children and adolescents passing by. I have at times seen posters of unblushing posturing and love-making which are not to be indiscriminately and prominently exposed. Very often the films themselves are unobjectionable but the posters are. Greater latitude may be given to posters which are set in the precincts of the cinema house, provided they are not exposed to the gaze of people passing along the streets.

43. Given an efficient censorship, I don't think there is any need for a control over the import of films. As for the export of films, I do not know whether there is any and whereto. There may be need for control in the interests of the trade itself and the future of film industry in India. For worthless—artistically—films exported may give the exhibitors abroad a poor idea of Indian production and discourage further enquiry.

(c) A Committee of two or three persons may be appointed at Bombay or Calcutta, whichever place is more convenient, to inspect export films. The persons so appointed may be Indians themselves, with an understanding of art and technique.

44. The Press at any rate could help a good deal in raising the moral and artistic standard of films exhibited. I suppose it would be too much to ask the Press not to publish advertisement of films which may offend public decency. But they could at any rate help positively, by favourably reviewing the better kind of films and prominently drawing public attention to them.

45. I don't believe in Government control over film-production. It may be too irksome and unacceptable to trade.

But I should certainly like film producing companies to be registered and licensed, and the studios inspected now and again.

### **Oral Evidence of Mr. A. SOARES, Principal, Antonio Desouza High School, Byculla, on Tuesday, the 15th November 1927.**

*Chairman:* You are the Principal of the Antonio Desouza High School?

A. Yes.

Q. How long have you been there?

A. For the last five years.

Q. I suppose you know Bombay very well?

A. I have been here for 15 years, and I have practically settled down here.

Q. Do you visit cinema shows very often?

A. I go occasionally, i.e., whenever I find that there is an interesting film, I visit a theatre, or whenever I feel run down and need a little recreation, I go to a cinema, but not regularly.

Q. I suppose you visit theatres where both Indian and western films are shown?

A. Mostly I have been to Western films. I have so far seen only three or four Indian films during the last two years.

Q. What are the Indian films that you have seen?

A. I have seen " Sacrifice," " At the Clang of Fetters " and " The Light of Asia," if it can be called an Indian film, because I am told it was produced outside India.

Q. Where did you see them, in the Fort?

A. Sometimes in the Fort and sometimes in the Royal Opera House.

Q. Does the Royal Opera House show Indian films?

A. They show all Western films.

Q. There are certain theatres which show only Western films and you think they will lose their caste if they show any Indian films? You have put it very graphically?

A. Yes, that is my own opinion.

Q. You think the exhibitors will lose their clientele if they show Indian films?

A. There are certain people who would not like to see Indian films, but I dare say there are a large number of people who would certainly like to see Indian films if they are good and worth seeing.

Q. But even if the film were a good one, the exhibitors would not take the risk of showing it?

A. That depends upon the exhibitors. When I say a good or bad film, I refer merely to the technical aspect of it.

Q. You really think they might take courage in both hands and see how the audience takes it?

A. Yes, they might do that.

Q. Of course, they know their business best, is it not?

A. I should say so, but very often the fear that they will lose their clientele might keep them back from undertaking such an experiment.

Q. Would you advocate some compulsion in all these theatres in order to encourage the indigenous industry, that every theatre should show some Indian picture provided it is passed as good with due regard to the quality?

A. I am against compulsion of any kind.

Q. It is rather an important point for us and I should like to know your views on it. In order to encourage the growth of the Indian film industry, this fear or prejudice should be removed, is it not?

A. Yes.

Q. The fear of losing caste, as you put it, may be imaginary, and once the exhibitors are compelled to exhibit Indian films, probably the Indian films may become popular also with the western and westernised audience?

A. But I would not approve of the principle of compulsion even for the sake of the growth of the Indian film industry.

Q. Do you know in Great Britain they are adopting a quota system, that every exhibitor should show a certain number of Empire-made films?

A. I am against that.

Q. You do not believe in encouraging the Indian film industry in any way?

A. Not by compulsion. I am against it. Not by forcing it down the throats of the people.

Q. In the same way you are not for encouraging British Empire films in that way?

A. I am distinctly against it. If the trade finds that it is to their interest, let them do it themselves. After all, their motives are commercial and they ought to know their business best.

Q. I believe you are of the opinion that educational films should be manufactured here?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you advocate that Government should do it or you think that other people should take it up?

A. First of all the producers might consider that it is not paying, and secondly they will not have sufficient technical knowledge to produce really good educational films.

Q. So that these educational films should be produced by Government?

A. Either by the Government or by an agency subsidised by Government.

Q. Do you think the educated classes, both men and women, can be encouraged to take part in cinema theatres?

A. Yes, I think so.

Q. Is there anything more needed to encourage them?

A. What is really needed is a little more knowledge about the conditions in which the film industry is worked in India. When people see that participation in the film industry means a lot of money, as it does in America and other countries, they will readily come in. In foreign countries good actors are called Stars, and when people here see the potentialities in the line, they will certainly go into the line in much larger numbers, particularly because unemployment among the educated classes is assuming alarming proportions.

Q. What about scenario writers?

A. For that you will require men of a literary type with some dramatic imagination.

Q. Do you want education to be specialised in that line or facilities given to take special training in scenario writing?

A. Special training will certainly be required.

Q. Do you think the University or the Government should afford special facilities to young men or should do something in this matter?

A. If Government starts a studio, that would be like a training ground for scenario writers, directors and all the rest of it.

Q. Do you advocate Government starting studios for amusement purposes or only for propaganda purposes?

A. Government would primarily start them for educational purposes, but would also educate the cinema trade by producing model films for amusement purposes.

Q. We are told it would be a very costly thing to put up a studio. Do you think Government would be justified in spending that amount?

A. I don't think it would be a wasteful expenditure—the more so as I think that as soon as it is found that good cinema films are in demand both here and outside, business men would start companies with large capital and Government could pass on their own studio to them later on.

Q. Your idea is that after being a pioneer in that matter and having created a good set of actors and actresses and provided a good studio, Government should hand it over to a private concern after a certain time. You think it is well worth spending money on that?

A. Well worth while. For instance, from the educational point of view a lot of money is spent in educating people in schools and colleges. Now a film which appeals to the eye is much more direct and powerful in its influence.

Q. Your point of view is that you not would leave the improvement of the industry in the hands of the people who are now in it. It is not likely to improve unless Government does some pioneering in that direction?

A. That is my impression. Unless a really big company with responsible people at the head and a large capital is started.

Q. You think it is likely you can find such companies?

A. I don't see why not. I hear for instance the Indian princes are interested in it.

Q. You can't go by the newspapers.

A. Apart from that, the Bombay industries could take a hand in the matter.

Q. Why don't they do it?

A. Well, perhaps this inquiry might open their eyes.

Q. I mean are they so bad as that, that the inquiry alone would open their eyes? Do you think there is any unpopularity in the profession?—is it not socially respectable?

A. There are already a number of educated people actually working in it.

Q. But is there any such unpopularity?

A. I don't think so. And if there is, a well established firm, with a good directorate which carries the confidence of the public, would do away with it.

Q. Are you firm in your opinion that the Government should take it up?

A. For want of any private company.

Q. Do you think any private company would take it up if the Government did not make any effort? That is my point. Do you think the company will come into existence which you have in mind, if the Government did not make any effort?

A. I cannot say. Perhaps they are afraid of losing money.

Q. It is going to be costly. Government would have to spend much more than a private company, if they have to run the concern.

A. To a certain extent. But there are various factors which would lessen the cost.

Q. There must be some pressing public object in order to induce the Government to embark on such an enterprise. I quite appreciate your point of view as regards educational propaganda. As regards the amusement aspect of it, it would be the duty of the Government to give the right direction to the industry. If private enterprise will not do it, you say it is part of the duty of Government to do it?

A. Unless there are more pressing needs of the Government. But apart from that, if I may just say a word, I mean this Government studio to be a real training ground for all these people.

Q. That is what you have in mind—you have told us. You are not a politician? Then I won't trouble you with the economic aspect of the thing.

You have made some general statements as to what class of films should be shown. I should like to know definitely from you, from your experience of Bombay, whether the cinema has an injurious effect on the Indian public—I mean whether educated or uneducated.

A. I should like to know the precise point of the question.

Q. Say for instance, is there any moral degradation? New forms of morality, new ideas about the relations between the sexes? Are we getting worse by going to the cinema? Can we attribute any demoralising effect to the cinema?

A. It is very difficult to give any precise answer to a question like that.

Q. Well, if the thing has not struck an educationist of your experience, that in itself I take it is proof that it is not. Am I right?

A. There is a general impression that there is a certain amount of general degeneration but how far it is due to the cinema, is more than one can say.

Q. If there is demoralisation it is due to numerous factors—for instance, more freedom between the sexes which you see in actual life.

A. Even post-war anarchy of thought, to a certain extent.

Q. I mean the cinema may be one of the factors?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think it is such a factor as to call for any urgent or particular remedy?

A. Well, if you show a certain number of films whose nature is bound to produce on the ordinary and unprejudiced mind a certain amount of demoralisation, whether that demoralisation exists in fact or not who can measure? But I say there is a tendency. If you put a temptation in the way of somebody, whether that person falls or not may depend on the person.

Q. You see it is very easy to generalise on a matter like that. The difficulty is when you come to the actualities of it. Of course, you recognise that a certain amount of freedom is necessary for the development of the trade. Do you think that undue freedom is now given?

A. I think there is a little too much freedom given to the films. My point is simply this, that a film may be shown to a definite class of people or set of people with a certain connection of ideas or ideals without producing any bad effects, and yet the same film if shown to the public indiscriminately, any child or young man.

Q. Please keep the child out of it for the present—let us have the general public.

A. The child is part of the public. Some of these films are likely to create a certain amount of demoralisation in the general public. It should be kept down, and the very job of censorship means that.

Q. Would you require a different standard of censorship in India from what prevails in England?

A. I think from the moral point of view the standard may be the same.

Q. Then from what other point should it be different?

A. In the case of certain films which portray British or American life or certain aspects of it, there should be different standards required for Indian audiences.

Q. What are the things you have in mind?

A. I have in mind, for instance, the over-free life, scenes of debauchery, etc., night clubs, Bohemianism, which is often portrayed.

Q. Have you seen many of them?

A. I have seen some. I saw some only quite recently.

Q. Well, let us have an instance.

A. For instance, there was a film lately shown at the Royal Opera House called "The Duchess of Buffalo." It begins with ballet dancing. Of course there is nothing in that.

Q. Have you seen ballet dancing on the stage?

A. Yes.

Q. Was the thing shown on the screen different?

A. No. So far as that is concerned, it was all right. I have pretty broad views on the matter. But as soon as that was finished, there appeared a leading actress, a star, and she was dressed in filmy stuff which could hardly be seen. She seemed to have many yards of it on her and there appeared a faun or satyr. He went through a little dance with her. And he began to undress her publicly and as she struggled, one piece and then another piece of cloth was taken from off her body. And the film was turned a bit and the audience was made to see the stage audience clapping their hands and laughing and gloating over the scene and thoroughly enjoying what was going on, and then somebody was made to say—the words were thrown on the screen: "Oh don't take that last bit off her." And after that the film continued where adultery was made very cheap and very funny. And that film passed through the censors' board all right.

Q. And you would have rejected it altogether?

A. At any rate I should have cut out certain parts which would not have made any difference to the film even from the artistic point of view, because it was mere padding to attract the attention of a certain class of people.

Q. You mean it should have been cut out in any country?

A. I should say so. I mean in any country that cares for decency and so on.

Q. Where was this shown?

A. At the Opera House. I think the film might be in Bombay still, if you care to see it.

Q. I don't think I have seen that film, but I have seen the sort of thing you mean.

A. And if I may go a little further, even classical films are sometimes disfigured in this way. Take for instance "Quo Vadis." I went because of the title, and I took my wife with me. But I was very sorry I took her.

Q. Do you know what country it belongs to?

A. Italy. You mean the first one? That was an American film.

Q. Do you know whether it was shown in England or not?

A. I cannot say.

Q. Did anyone here complain about that? You felt so much about it and yet you did not mention it to anybody?

A. I didn't mention it because we see many things that we find repugnant and yet don't take the trouble to write to the papers or to the board of censors.

**Q.** You do not mention it as an instance where the uninformed get affected. It is the informed who get affected?

**A.** Everybody gets affected.

**Q.** Do you think there is any validity in the distinction that is sought to be made between the uninformed and the informed in such matters?

**A.** I think so far as ordinary morality goes, the standard ought to be the same for everybody, whether he is a westerner or an easterner, I don't care.

**Q.** Or an England-returned Indian?

**A.** The only thing is, people who have been to England or outside or who are educated should know that that is not the complete American or European life and that it is only a small side of it. They can balance the whole view.

**Q.** Do you really believe that what one sees on the stage is the normal life of any country?

**A.** Well, when they are portrayed as the normal life, one must. They are not portrayed as something fantastic, but as ordinary things that happen; and they do happen as a matter of fact.

**Q.** You think people take what they see as happening in normal life? Do you think that is the normal life?

**A.** It is not the normal life. No civilisation could live which had such a normal life as that.

**Q.** And do you think anybody believes that to be the normal life?

**A.** There are lots of people who may.

**Q.** Have you travelled in the West?

**A.** I have not.

**Q.** And you do not believe it to be the normal life in the West?

**A.** Well, I am supposed to be a cultured man who has read a bit.

**Q.** You think the uninformed man is likely to gather the impression that that is the normal life of the country?

**A.** He is bound to get the impression if he sees one film after another of the same type. Unless he sees other films which show different aspects of the life of the West.

**Q.** Do they not?

**A.** It all depends how often people go to the cinema and what sort of films they see.

**Q.** You don't suggest that they go to this class films?

**A.** On the contrary I have said that this sort of risqué film, these too suggestive films, are not popular. And that this speaks well for the audience.

**Mr. Neogy:** So the mischief is not very great?

**A.** Especially the uneducated classes hardly ever see such films. I am speaking only of Bombay.

**Chairman:** Your experience is confined to Bombay city?

**A.** Yes.

**Sir Haroon Jaffer:** You say that you are not satisfied with the present condition of the film industry in India—you want men and money. You want money to improve the film industry in India and you also say that the people in whose hands the industry is have got very little capital.

**A.** Not sufficient capital.

**Q.** How do you suggest that we should get this money?

**A.** The money is in the hands of the public, of investors. Just as people invest in any industry they might start a joint stock company for this.

**Q.** You say there should be such people as Tatas and others to start a film industry?

**A.** That is the way the capital will be forthcoming.

**Q.** You say that the producers should send men to America to learn the art at the expense of the producers. Do you want Government also to take a lead in the matter?

**A.** It depends. If the suggestion that I have made of Government undertaking to establish a studio in India is feasible, then there is no need of sending men out of India. Government will have to get a few experts from outside to train these people here.

**Q.** And if the Government do not start the studio, then you say the producer should send the men to America at their own expense? Government is not to help them?

**A.** Government could give scholarships and send the men there in that case.

**Q.** In your opinion it is very hard to get actors and actresses from good families?

**A.** Yes, especially actresses.

**Q.** It is not possible to get actresses at all?

**A.** There may be one here or there. But it is very difficult to get them because of the association with undesirable people.

**Q.** And you say that men can take the part of actresses?

**A.** They do take it, as far as I understand. They have taken as a matter of fact. It is not the ideal thing, but they will do. I mean it is much easier to take such a part on the screen where their voices cannot be heard, than on the stage. And in the middle ages and in Elizabethan England boys always took these parts on the stage.

*Chairman:* Even to-day, we have boy actors.

**A.** Yes, in the colleges.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* You want the films made for use in schools to be a medium of instruction?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** In the class room?

**A.** In a class room it is out of the question, unless the school has the apparatus. Of course there are now baby cinemas on the market.

**Q.** Do you know that Bulchand Karamchand, the headmaster of the high school at Hyderabad, Sind, started showing such films and used to teach the boys through their medium? Do you think that this should be started again? Your Director, Mr. Hesketh, mentions it in his report.

**A.** I have never seen any such film.

**Q.** But if such a film were started, you would like it?

**A.** Certainly. It all depends on the educational value of the films. If they were really good and educative, they would be welcome.

*Mr. Coatsman:* Where is your school?

**A.** In Byculla.

**Q.** What communities and classes are your boys drawn from?

**A.** Well, from all possible classes. It is open to all, but the bulk is Roman Catholic.

**Q.** Europeans?

**A.** No, almost all Indians. There are very few Anglo-Indians or Europeans.

**Q.** Mostly Indians.

**A.** Practically all.

**Q.** Is it a day school or a boarding school?



A. It is a day school.

Q. Entirely?

A. Yes.

Q. Up to what ages do the boys attend school?

A. Up to 20 or even more. Some of them begin education rather late in life.

*Chairman:* It is rarely one hears of a boy of 20 in a high school.

*Mr. Coatman:* What standard of education do you work up to?

A. Up to the school leaving examination.

Q. Have you ever taken any of your class to the films?

A. Yes, I have taken them once or twice to the films.

Q. What sort of films?

A. There was one showing the biblical story of creation—quite a good film. There was nothing objectionable in it. Sometimes I tell them of any decent pictures that are being shown that it might be worth while for them to see or that are of educational value. I find, for instance, *Pathe's Gazette* to be a very good thing in that respect, keeping them in touch with what is going on in the world. Of course there is too much about sport in it—but it could be developed into a good aid to education.

Q. I suppose your boys are drawn from the poorer classes?

A. All possible classes, poor, middle, as well as the higher class.

Q. Do you happen to know if they go much on their own to the cinema?

A. The smaller children of course not. But the boys from 15 to 20 do go. I have seen that with my own eyes.

Q. They go quite a lot?

A. Yes.

Q. What are the cinema theatres in your areas?

A. Well, they don't go merely to the theatres in my area. My area doesn't contain any good cinema. There is one, the *Alexander*, to which they go because it deals in stunts and thrills and so on. But they very often go to the *Fort* area.

Q. Then they see the Western films. That is what they generally see?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you noticed any effect produced on your boys by their attendance at the films? Has it tended to make them, for example, less disciplined?

A. Again it is a very difficult question to answer. Because you have to compare what they were before they took to seeing the cinema with what they are after.

Q. Well, I will put it in this way. You can only give general impressions of course. Have you ever had any cause to suspect or feel that the tendency of the cinema was affecting your boys undesirably in any way at all?

A. I can't say.

Q. You have never been uneasy on the subject?

A. No, I have not.

Q. Your boys are mostly Indians, you say?

A. Yes.

Q. I notice you agree generally with the proposition that it would be desirable to show as many *Empire* films as possible in this country.

A. I make a distinction there. If they are of educational value, it would be certainly desirable, but if they are merely competitive with the usual American films almost of the same type, I do not see why any one type should be given preference.

Q. I see. But let us think of films, whether they are competitive or not, which do definitely show the people of one part of the Empire the real conditions of life, natural surroundings and so on, in another part of the Empire. You think it would be desirable to have these shown more?

A. I think it would be desirable.

Q. Why do you think so?

A. Because India, forming part of the Empire, it is very necessary that we should learn to know one another and respect one another. That is my only point. And secondly from the educational point of view. From the educational point of view, the Indian education has a British tinge about it and things about Empire play a greater part there, and the knowledge of the Empire given in the schools is comparatively more than about the rest of the world.

Q. Do you think that any specific steps should be taken to ensure a better circulation and a freer circulation of Empire produced films in different parts of the Empire?

A. As I suggest, certain kinds of films which have a distinctly educational appeal, which show the actual working of the institutions, the industries, and that sort of thing of the Empire—they could be marked 'educational' by the respective Governments before exporting and they may be given preference, and not others.

Q. I think Mr. Green will be able to point out certain difficulties in the way of that being done, but have you any other suggestions to make in this matter?

A. Personally I have no other suggestion. I do not think the raising of the tariff is any good. I do not believe in that, because, as I say, it is a blind instrument which does not discriminate between the good film and the bad film, whether Empire-made or American.

Q. Do you think that something in the form of a reciprocal agreement between any two or more parts of the Empire to take each other's films for exhibition—do you think that such an agreement as that could be arrived at?

A. That, of course, is preferential treatment.

Mr. Green: Purely as a business proposition.

Mr. Coutman: Purely as a business proposition?

A. It all depends. In all such things there is always a certain amount of give and take. It will depend whether the Indian industry is likely to suffer from any such step or not, and to my mind it is likely to suffer.

Q. What I have in mind is some form of reciprocal agreement in which everybody's interest will be safeguarded.

A. A generalisation like that is all very well, but looking at it from the point of view of the particular aspects of the Indian film . . .

Q. You have not grasped what I mean. Do you think that a form of some agreement may be arrived at between India and Australia, or between India and the United Kingdom, or between any two or more parts of the Empire, to get together and study each other's conditions and problems by means of the films and to that end to see that each other's films do circulate in their countries—don't you think that some arrangement of that sort would be a good thing, no doubt you will safeguard each other's interests properly.

A. If it could be done by safeguarding each other's interests, all right. But my point is this. It is useless for the Governments to say "We are going to circulate each other's films . . ."

Q. I am not thinking of Governments.

A. I am thinking of the exhibitor. How are you going to force such films on the exhibitor?

Q. We do not want to force.

A. Supposing there is a reciprocal agreement between two Governments to take one another's films. It is not the Government that take the films as a matter of fact; it is the exhibitors of the country that take the films. How are you going to interest exhibitors in the films unless the films by themselves can stand competition or appeal to the taste of the public? Merely because they are Empire films it does not follow that they would do so. In the circumstances what is the effect of the reciprocal agreement or anything like that? My other point is this. Any such agreement giving, directly or indirectly, preference to particular countries might create retaliation in other parts of the world in case the film industry of India grows and is able to export Indian films, and they might build a tariff wall against Indian films.

*Chairman:* In other parts of the world?

A. Yes. A really good film based on a civilisation which is different from the civilisation of the West, I think, they will have a good chance of making good either in America or in Europe.

*Mr. Neogy:* You have stated that there is some likelihood of Indian films finding a market in America and Europe?

A. Yes.

Q. I do not know whether you think that a similar market can be found in the other parts of the Empire as well. Is there any special reason which makes you think that there is a greater likelihood of Indian films finding a market in America and Europe than in the other parts of the Empire? Do you think that the Indian ways of life and Indian civilisation are likely to be better appreciated in those parts of the world which are outside the British Empire, and that the other parts of the world which are not so familiar with India are likely to patronise the Indian film industry more than the Empire?

A. The statement that I have made has nothing whatever to do with familiarity breeding contempt on the part of the Empire. It was made only to point out that there is in America a wide educated and a very curious mentality—and also on the continent of Europe—a very curious mentality which would like to know something about extraneous civilisation and foreign civilisation. Mind you, the European civilisation and the American civilisation are of the same type, and if they at all wish to go in for any outside civilisation which is worth seeing, then they have to go either to India or to China and these are the only two countries that can supply their curiosity.

Q. So you are against taking any step which may have the effect of antagonising those potential markets for Indian films?

A. Yes.

Q. Are you aware that America furnishes the largest field for the film industry?

A. Yes.

Q. And from that point of view particularly, you won't recommend to this Committee any step that may have the effect of affecting India's possible market in America?

A. I do not recommend it.

Q. The only preferential treatment which you are prepared to give in regard to Empire films would be confined to films of a distinctly educative character?

A. Yes.

Q. And your idea is that the respective Governments of the different parts of the Empire might enter into an arrangement for the exchange of these films which are of a strictly educational character for being exhibited in the educational institutions.

A. Not merely educational institutions but also the general public.

Q. Circulating them to the exhibitors for being shown?

A. Yes.

Q. But you are against any sort of compulsion being exercised on the exhibitor?

A. Yes, in no case, even for Indian films.

Q. That is to say, all that the Governments are to do is to make certain kinds of films available to the trade. Do you contemplate the trade having to pay for those films, or is it a sort of propaganda to be carried on by Government at its own expense?

A. My idea was that the trade should pay for such films except when they are strictly educational and can be used by Government for educational purposes, limited in the strict sense of the word.

Q. Your idea is that it should be open to the trade either to take any such film from the Government or not, and if it accepted a film of that character from Government, then only the trade should pay?

A. Yes.

Q. No question of compulsion?

A. No.

Q. Do you think that there is any hindrance at present for good Empire films coming out to India, either legislative or fiscal or anything of the kind?

A. I am not aware.

Q. Why do you state that the average American films make rather a sort of sensuous appeal. Have you seen many British or Empire films?

A. No. I may have seen, but it is very difficult however to find which is American and which is British, but many or most of the films that are shown are American.

Q. So you have no reason to suppose that Empire films would be of quite a different character?

A. I cannot tell you from my own experience, but I hear that though a number of them from the moral point of view might be better I am also told that they are rather dull.

Q. You have no first hand information? •

A. No.

Q. You do not advocate any restriction of the American films or interference except such as the censorship might bring about?

A. Yes.

Q. Supposing in a free field the Empire films are exhibited side by side with the American films in different theatres, do you think that these dull films, as you describe them, would be as attractive from the exhibitor's point of view as the sensational American films?

A. I have not qualified them as dull myself. I am only repeating what one or two other people have said. But there is no reason why the Empire films should be dull.

Q. So your idea is that the Empire film should improve in quality and then you would expect them to stand open competition?

A. As a matter of fact, they can stand a better chance I think.

Q. Do you think in regard to censorship the standard to be adopted should be more stringent in the case of the screen than in the case of the stage? Of course, there is no censorship of the stage. Would you allow a particular theme to be depicted in a particular manner on the stage but object to that very theme being depicted in that very same way on the screen?

A. My objection would be the same in both cases.

Q. So you want a uniformity of standard?

A. Yes.

*Q.* Referring to certain films you say that they are likely to be of a revolutionary character from certain points of view, but you would not be prepared to support a censorship standard which would seek to exclude . . .

*Chairman:* Will you please avoid reference to any particular film because it might damage it.

*Mr. Neogy:* Would you permit a revolutionary conception, as you call it, on the stage, but object to its being shown on the screen?

*A.* It is a very difficult thing. I must make myself quite precise. There may be revolutionary films as regards social evils, but if the treatment of it is gross which is likely to offend large classes of people . . .

*Q.* I am thinking of an instance in which a particular theme is represented in a particular manner both on the stage and on the screen, the very same thing in the very same manner. Would you allow it on the stage and object to it on the screen?

*A.* No.

*Colonel Crawford:* You have given us a very interesting reply to our questionnaire which answers most of the things that I would have liked to put to you. Where did you get all your knowledge from?

*A.* Partly from general observation, but I also made enquiries from certain men who were likely to know, including cinema proprietors.

*Q.* Prior to the Cinema Committee being appointed, or from an educational point of view you had made these enquiries?

*A.* Yes, but mainly on account of the questionnaire that was sent to me.

*Chairman:* Did you make any investigation prior to getting the questionnaire?

*A.* No special investigation.

*Colonel Crawford:* I take it you have no doubt of the very great educational factor that the film is in the world to-day, I am talking of the film as a form of entertainment.

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Having that in view, are you in favour of Government guidance of the film?

*A.* In what sense?

*Q.* In all senses, not only by censorship but generally to help the development of good films, films of real value to society.

*A.* If Government could effectively do that, it would be a good thing.

*Q.* You say this is a tremendous educational factor in the world to-day?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Are you prepared to leave it in the hands of men who are dealing with it entirely from the commercial point of view, or do you think, from the educational point of view, as an educational factor, there should be a certain amount of control?

*A.* Wise guidance would be certainly good.

*Q.* As an educationist you think the film is of tremendous value from the visual instruction point of view?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Do you think it is of such importance that visual instruction should take a certain amount of precedence over primary education? It is a question of money available. You have so much money for primary education, which is not quite enough for all your needs in respect of primary education. Would you forego expenditure on that to give a certain amount of visual instruction?

*A.* I hold certain views on that matter which are strong. There is no contradiction between the two things. Visual instruction would be part and parcel, perhaps a very important part and parcel of primary education. . . .

Q. And therefore expenditure on that is justifiable?

A. Yes. Primary education, as it is given now-a-days, most of it is useless.

Q. You think visual instruction would be of better value?

A. Yes.

Q. As regards the general standard of films produced to-day in any country, are you of opinion,—I rather gathered so from the opinion you gave, that the producer is laying undue emphasis on the lower side of life?

A. Yes.

Q. How would you treat it? By censorship?

A. So far as I can see, by censorship.

Q. You have given us some idea of the types of scenes that should be taken out. I shall be very brief on this question of the Empire. I quite understand your position, that you do not want to take any steps that will harm the trade of Indian films in foreign markets. That is your actual position?

A. Yes.

Q. What portions of the foreign market to-day, that is, market outside India, do you think are most interested in India and therefore more likely to take our films?

A. As our film industry stands at present there is no chance.

Q. Supposing we could produce excellent films, what parts of the world do you think are most likely to offer an attractive market for such films?

A. America I should think, France, Germany.

Q. They are far more likely to give you an attractive market than Great Britain?

A. Yes.

Mr. Green: I have very little to ask you because I agree with Colonel Crawford that you have sent a very illuminating reply to our questionnaire. One point about customs. Are you by any chance a free trader? You have no particular views on that?

A. I have studied economics, but that question cannot be answered off hand.

Q. You would not like to see any tariff aid given to the cinema industry except after a full investigation by the Tariff Board?

A. Yes.

Q. That represents your views?

A. Yes.

Q. One other point about customs. You would like educational films to be certified by the Government of the exporting country to be educational and to be passed free by the customs or at reduced rates?

A. Or it may be free.

Q. I put it to you that it is not very safe to depend on an outside foreign certificate as a guide in customs administration. It is a technical point from the customs point of view. I sympathise with your object, but would it not be more possible if you wanted to do something, to have a rebate given after the film had been imported into the country and certified by some authority to be of educational value?

A. Yes, if it is more feasible.

Q. In answer to question No. 26 you say that the censor's position is very invidious.

A. Yes.

Q. You want to give a certain limited scope to reformers to show a certain amount of stuff that will not be acceptable to the orthodox. You want to cut out bad films, but you do not want Puritanism to run amok. You

suggest we should ban the worst films but not try and ban every rather undesirable film that comes in as a matter of practical politics. Is not the censor in effect trying to do that at present, though I do not say that the censor is successful in all cases.

A. From what I gather the censors hardly ever see a film.

Q. I can show from better experience that they see quite a number.

A. I am told the matter is left to the Inspector.

Q. Your own suggestion about the censorship board is that it should include men of educational experience, and I understand from your answer to question No. 35 that there may be a full-time stipendiary censor of good educational qualifications with an advisory board?

A. Yes.

Q. And I suppose if the work justified it, you would have 2 or 3 stipendiary censors?

A. I cannot say. What I meant to say was this. If, for instance, you cannot get a sufficient number of men to do the work themselves or it is going to be very expensive to have a large number, then I say it is better to have a good man like that.

Q. It is largely a question of finance. You do not mind so long as the person who ever does the work is well qualified?

A. Yes.

### **Written Statement of the Committee of the Indian Merchants' Chamber, Bombay, dated the 10th November 1927.**

1. Some of the members of this Chamber are interested in Cinematograph Industry

8. Western films are as much appreciated as Indian films.

13. In order to help the growth of the film industry, my Committee suggest the abolition of duty on undeveloped films which is, as a matter of fact, a raw material for the industry and as such should not be taxed. My Committee are in favour of continuing the present duty of 15 per cent. on imported prepared cinema films as such a duty acts as a protection to the Indian cinematograph industry. My Committee also recommend that the present duty on cameras used for the cinematograph industry should be reduced. My Committee in this connection suggest that the valuation of films must be increased to Rs. 2-8-0 per foot.

14. An increased use of the cinema for educational purposes in schools and for adult education and agriculture, public health, etc., by Government or other agencies is advisable. My Committee recommend that such films should be got prepared by Indian cinema companies.

15. Conditions in this country are favourable to the development of an Indian film producing industry on a large scale. There is a huge population in this country scattered about in different towns and villages. Theatre companies are hardly able to go outside a few towns and cities and even there their rates are not suitable for an ordinary purse. There are not practically any amenities of life and the cinematograph if it is rightly and properly conducted would be a good medium for affording innocent pleasure to all this population whether in towns, cities or villages. All these people are fond of village shows which are gipsy in their character and which are a feature of the life of the country since a long time past. The cinematograph will thus come to satisfy the taste which is already there.

17. My Committee think that sufficient capital will be forthcoming for film production.

18. My Committee do not approve of any Government action whether legislative or administrative being taken to develop the cinematograph industry.

It should be left to be developed by private enterprise. The Government can, however, help by patronising Indian cinematograph companies whenever any official films are to be taken or giving facilities to the cinematograph companies in the preparation of their films.

21. My Committee do not approve of a State agency being created to undertake the management of the film industry.

22. My Committee are strongly opposed to any policy of Imperial Preference being introduced as it were through a side-door. They have already expressed their opinions in a letter addressed to the Government of India, a copy of which was sent to the Indian Cinematograph Enquiry Committee, and they again emphasise that no recommendation regarding Imperial Preference in any form should be made by this Committee. It is a question which is to be decided by the Legislature of the country as a straight issue and no efforts should be made to get it in an indirect manner.

23. The various Governments of the British Empire may be left to look after all these things themselves at their own expense.

24. (a) With the censorship as it is, we have not come across any films which are open to this charge.

(b) There is no general circulation of immoral or criminally suggested films.

(c) & (d) Rigid and intelligent censorship is required for crime films.

\*25. My Committee do not think so.

27. (a) As far as my Committee know there is no misunderstanding on this score. They do not think that Western films are misunderstood. They are understood well as they are depicted.

(b) My Committee have not come across any such instances. If there are, however, any films which misrepresent India they should be proscribed.

28. There are no objectionable films.

29. Such a differentiation should be made only with regard to matters of sex and it should be left to the discretion of the Board of Censors.

30. My Committee are not in favour of prohibiting all children below a certain age from visiting cinemas.

31. Proper censorship is an effective method for guarding against the misuse of the films.

32. My Committee suggest that the Board of Censors should be constituted as follows for the Bombay Presidency:—

- (1) One representative of producers of cinematograph films;
- (2) One representative of Exhibitors;
- (3) One representative of Importers;
- (4) Commissioner of Police;
- (5) One representative of the Bombay University;
- (6) One representative of the Bombay Municipal Corporation;
- (7) One representative of the Indian Merchants' Chamber;
- (8) One representative of the Bombay Chamber of Commerce; and
- (9) Two gentlemen to be nominated by the Government.

This Board should have an Indian Secretary and an Indian Inspector or Inspectors preferably with English experience. The Board should elect their own Chairman.

33. It all depends upon the extent of the strictness.

34. My Committee are in favour of Provincial Boards of Censors and do not approve of their substitution by a single Central Board.

45. My Committee are opposed to any control being exercised over film production, but are of opinion that license must be given to the companies



in which Indian interests are predominant. It should also be made a condition that a percentage of  $7\frac{1}{2}$  of Indian films should be shown in every theatre from 1930 or an earlier date if possible and the same be increased by  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. every year until it reaches 25 per cent., before a license is given.

**Oral Evidence of Mr. WALCHAND HARICHAND, President, and Mr. J. K. MEHTA, Secretary, Indian Merchants' Chamber, Bombay, on Tuesday, the 15th November 1927.**

*Chairman:* I take it, Mr. Walchand, you and Mr. Mehta represent the Indian Merchants' Chamber.

A. Yes.

Q. You are President of the Chamber now?

A. Yes.

Q. And Mr. Mehta is the Secretary?

A. Yes.

Q. Was this memorandum which you have sent to us placed before a committee of that general body.

A. That is the usual procedure. The committee of the Chamber have approved of this.

Q. This represents the views of your Chamber?

A. Of the committee appointed by the Chamber. That is the usual procedure.

Q. Now, being a Merchants Chamber you are interested more in the economic aspects of the question.

A. Yes.

Q. I propose to trouble you about the economic aspects. What is your opinion as to the industry, do you consider it a necessity or a luxury?

A. I rather consider it generally a luxury, but as it is a recreation also and educates, instructs or broadens one's views, to that extent it can be called a necessity.

Q. Possibly also on the ground that it is the main if not the only amusement of the poor.

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think the Indian cinema industry, the producing industry in the country is one deserving of being encouraged and fostered by the Government.

A. Yes, but not directly. It is an industry which should be encouraged and fostered but not directly by any Government means.

Q. You mean the Government itself should not undertake production?

A. Exactly.

Q. But it should do something towards encouraging and fostering the industry?

A. They could do that by an increased import duty.

Q. I will come to the details later. For the present I want the general principle. You would advocate such encouragement by an increased import duty on imported films. And secondly?

A. Removal of duty on the raw materials connected with the industry.

Q. Thirdly?

A. Giving different facilities. The Government can give to the industry permission to use the forts, etc.

Q. Give facilities in the way of places and scenes and equipment wherever they can spare them?

A. Yes.

Q. I see you also refer to the way in which Indian films might be encouraged by having a quota system.

A. Yes.

Q. These are the methods you advocate. Now do you advocate them all together or separately. Supposing a quota system were introduced, would you then also advocate the increased import duty and the abolition of duty.

A. Yes, all together.

Q. They are all cumulative steps?

A. Yes.

Q. I suppose you are aware that the Indian films now produced are not of such a nature as can have a commercial value on their own merits except with Indian audiences.

A. And that counts.

Q. That counts a great deal, but I mean supposing you introduce a quota system and make it compulsory on theatres which cater purely for Europeans and Westernised Indians, do you think you have got sufficient good Indian films which you can force on them?

A. We have already some films which will do for this but such encouragement as I suggest will produce films suitable to the so-called educated or Westernised audiences. If there is a quota system more films like "The Light of Asia" will be produced.

Q. You can introduce the quota system gradually and with judgment?

A. Yes, we do mention that you should begin with a small percentage of  $7\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. and increase it according to circumstances.

Q. You see one point of difficulty we have in applying the quota system is one which I must mention to you at once. There are certain theatres, taking the Bombay side, which now run 100 per cent. Western films, there are certain theatres which run 100 per cent. Indian films, and there are certain theatres which run mixed films. Now would you advocate a quota system for every theatre or would you be content with a quota system like this say a man owns 2 or 3 theatres, one in the city and the others in the Fort, both together he must exhibit that quota?

A. In the first place I think if we have 20 cinema theatres there are only 3 or 4 which can be considered to cater to Westernised tastes.

Q. There are 10 which only show Western films. This was given us by people in the trade.

A. I see. It is a detail to be settled, whether freedom to show the quota be given on the total length irrespective of the theatre. Supposing Madan's have got 6 theatres, 3 Western and 3 in the Indian locality; whether on the whole length they show that quota in one of the theatres or 2 of the theatres, I would leave to the committee.

Q. My difficulty is with Madan's or any other exhibitor who runs 100 per cent. already of Indian pictures in the existing theatres. Supposing you want  $7\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. He will say "Taking the two theatres together I am running 100 per cent. and your  $7\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. comes under that." How will that be a solution or an encouragement to the Indian industry unless you make it compulsory for each theatre?

A. The  $7\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. in the initial stage will take up only about 6 or 7 minutes or say 10 minutes running on a 90 minutes show.

Q. Taking all the theatres together in Bombay city certainly 5 or 6 times your  $7\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. is now being run.

A. Admitted.

Q. How is that a help to the industry for further encouragement by compelling a  $7\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. quota. On this basis it cannot be done unless we make it compulsory on each theatre.

A. I am afraid we will have to do that under the circumstances.

Q. That is the point on which I want your opinion, if you want to consider it. I feel the difficulty. It is not an easy matter.

A. The secretary tells me that in the detailed discussion that was the sense of the meeting, that this quota should be exhibited individually in every theatre?

Q. Otherwise it will be meaningless when a man owns more than one theatre. As perhaps you know in England they have certain liberties given to the renter and the exhibitor. The proposed Bill has not become law yet but they propose to give him the option of running it in one particular theatre but where he directs two or three theatres he may show the whole quota by taking account of all exhibits.

A. But that won't satisfy us in view of the condition we are in. Already 40 per cent. are Indian films.

Q. In Bombay city we can safely say that nearly 40 per cent. are Indian films if not more. So you accept it as business people that it would be wise to compel each theatre.

A. Yes.

Q. You agree that these questions of tariff recommendations that you have put forward are more a matter for investigation by the Tariff Board.

A. I thought the Cinema Committee was expected by the terms of reference to suggest any means by which that industry can be encouraged. Can not the Committee suggest that an increased import duty will encourage the industry and that the import duty should be so and so. This is a specialised committee on this subject. Should the question go up to the Tariff Board in addition?

Q. Of course they are experts in that line.

A. That means going over the whole ground again.

Mr. Green: They will go into the financial side of the facts which we can hardly do.

A. If that is the interpretation placed on the terms of reference I have nothing more to say.

Q. We might decide that tariff aid is desirable but it might be difficult for us, without detailed figures, to make a firm recommendation to Government.

A. But you are having the trade before you. You are going through the figures. Would it not be possible for the Committee to make that recommendation? You can make it only for 8 years just as the Tariff Board made it for Iron and Steel, and if afterwards it is necessary it can go to the special Tariff Board.

Chairman: Now as regards the use of the cinema for educational purposes, for public utility purposes, do you think it would be safe for us to leave it to the trade or should it be done by Government agency.

A. I do not think Government need interfere or directly spend any money on that. It would be better left to private business institutions, and private business institutions, looking to the very short time they have had, only 5 or 7 years since the serious beginning of the cinema industry in India, I think have done well.

Q. Do you know what is done in Germany in this connection?

A. No, I have no idea.

Q. Or what Japan does?

A. I don't know.

Q. What facilities would you suggest for the trade to produce educational and propaganda films? It won't pay them.

A. Looking to the development of this industry during the last 7 years it has developed very well.

Q. But not produced a single educational film.

A. I think we have many educational films and sanitary films.

Q. That is done by the Department, whatever you have.

A. Yes.

Q. What I want to know is whether it will be a paying proposition to the trade to produce educational and propaganda films.

A. The railways and the Agriculture Department have already started such work.

Q. That is what I say. They are doing it for advertising their railways. Similarly with other institutions. They do it to advertise their own business.

A. The Tata Iron Works have produced a film of their Jamshedpur Works although I do not think that they have much to advertise, as these films cannot help them to sell their products.

Q. From your knowledge of business people in Bombay do you think it will be safe to leave it merely to private enterprise? That is my point.

A. I would at the present stage, looking to the past development of the industry. I would not interfere with Government agency or by a direct subsidy.

Q. Is that the considered opinion of the Chamber?

A. We have not gone into that aspect in detail. If you like I will submit it again to the committee. Generally we have said that we don't want any Government agency.

Q. It has been represented to us by the Educational Officer in charge of Visual Instruction....

A. That I can understand. If I were the Principal or Headmaster there I would say "let Government find the money and let Government do it." I can understand his anxiety to make the Government find the money; but as a general business man I would rather not have the Government interfere.

Q. Is it on account of any objection on principle?

A. I think these various departments, these are all provincial subjects, Education, Sanitation. I would rather keep them provincial rather than centralise them.

Q. That is, you would rather have each province spend money on an expert where one expert will do for all. In place of one expert, you want ten.

A. I do not agree. We shall not be wanting many hired experts particularly for educational films to be shown either to the agriculturist or school-children.

Q. Not only school children but adult education, mass education—don't you attach importance to that?

A. I do. Even then I would rather leave it to the provinces. It is admitted that education is an entirely provincialised subject.

Q. Nobody denies that.

A. Then let us leave it to the Provincial Government.

Q. I will ask you now whether Government should do something.

A. I would not at this stage.

Q. Has your Bombay Government made any effort in that direction?

A. I think some grant or indirect aid was asked for.

Q. And I am told they are reducing from year to year even their magic lantern budget because they are in financial difficulties and you would entrust it merely to each Provincial Government to produce its own films for educational and propaganda purposes?

A. It is not necessary to assume that provincial budgets should always be deficit budgets and the Imperial Budget a flourishing budget.

Q. My object is to make it a joint affair.

A. I would rather not do that. I would leave provincial autonomy alone.

**Q.** You would rather let mass education wait.

**A.** It does not necessarily mean that. The Provincial Governments are quite alive to their requirements and whatever they can do they have been doing. I think public opinion or public spirit also will get what it wants.

**Q.** Well, I won't pursue that matter. I have tried to put to you a difficulty. Don't think it is my view. I only want to find ways and means. When I put questions it does not mean that I am for it, or any other member for that matter. Some people I see make comments because we put questions as if we were wedded to these views. It does not mean that at all. We want to place our difficulties before you, so that we may have your assistance in the matter. Now there is one point which has been brought to our notice by many people, both Indians and Europeans—there is a general impression held by responsible Indians and also by responsible Europeans, that the cinema has a harmful effect upon the people of this country. I see from your answer to questions 22 and 24 (b) that you do not think there is any general circulation of immoral or criminally suggestive films. I will leave criminally suggestive films alone for the present. As I put it to the Commissioner of Police who appeared before us as President of the Censorship Board, Indian opinion will not tolerate any action on the ground that it lowers the Westerner's prestige or the policeman's prestige in the eyes of the Indian. It is not from that point of view that I ask this question; but if the injury to the Indian public is serious or widespread, then we will have to notice it. Do you agree to that proposition. If the cinema is productive of injury and tends to demoralise the people of this country, whether educated or uneducated does not matter, you agree that some steps should be taken to secure closer censorship or something of that sort.

**A.** We do not agree that the cinema as it is shown, whether the films be Indian or imported, has any harmful effect. I do not say the circumstances of the present films are perfect, a slightly greater rigidity or more intelligence in the censorship might be desirable.

**Q.** Do you think it requires to be improved or not? I want your opinion as citizens of Bombay whether you think the present films have really any damaging effect or a tendency in that direction?

**A.** We are I think 25 or 30 business men on the committee and that is the considered opinion of the committee.

**Q.** The question has been somewhat obscured by the prejudice created especially by Anglo-Indian press to the effect that the cinema is needed for maintaining the white men's prestige. On that ground there is a lot of prejudice gathered round this issue. As Indians we are interested in maintaining our own life, and to seeing that that life may not, from our point of view, be polluted. If there is risk of such pollution, do you not think it is up to us to take steps early before the evil becomes too great.

**A.** I quite differentiate between the two views you have put forward. I do not think it is being polluted.

**Q.** There is some difference of opinion on that point and it is very difficult for us to come to any conclusion. I began with the impression that it has such a demoralising effect. One or two instances I know of personally where the cinema has had such an effect. Of course it may have been due to company that the cinema frequenters I have in mind kept. In that way there is a downward tendency but whether the cinema as such has that effect I don't know. You as citizens must look after the welfare of the people. You do not think the evil of the cinema is so large or so serious or has a tendency so serious as to require any remedy?

**A.** No, there is no question of its being so serious or so large. Generally it has no demoralising or bad effect.

**Q.** Your opinion is not clouded by the prejudice which has gathered round the issue. Fully realising your responsibility as citizens of India, that is your firm believe. For instance it was mentioned to us by an educational authority this morning who has given us very considerable

evidence, I think I may say the best we have had; that gentleman told us he saw the film *The Duches of Buffalo* and it was a film which should not be shown to the public here without considerable excision. He saw it himself. He is the Headmaster of a High School here. I may tell you another leading citizen of Bombay has written to me that new forms of immorality and vice have cropped up on account of the cinema. It is not a thing merely confined to the Anglo-Indian correspondents of the London "Times" and other such persons but an opinion shared by some of the Indian public as well. So I am rather getting anxious about it. Although I thought little of it at first I am getting anxious about it. If it is found to be so, don't you think we should take steps?

A. We do not agree with that view. I might cite a parallel instance. You must have heard criticisms of a similar sort of our famous Sanskrit play "Maichadratic", that because a professional singing girl is introduced into it as a heroine it has a bad effect. We occasionally hear that sort of criticism; but no sensible man reading the play or seeing it on the stage can take away that impression. It cannot have a bad effect and we should not jump at conclusions and say such a drama should not be shown. Few college professors have actually banned it on that score, though many others have allowed it. After all it depends upon one's temperament, one's views, one's weakness.

Q. Anyhow I have pointed out the fact and I wanted to have your views in face of those declarations by responsible people. Now when you advocate the quota system you do accept the principle that there should be preference for Indian goods.

A. Yes.

Q. And you are emphatically against any preference for imperial goods.

A. Yes.

Q. And you have got a general objection which of course we all recognise, namely, the question of Imperial preference should not be decided on a small issue like this. That is your point of view?

A. Yes, that is the point of view.

Q. I am not going to discuss that with you. I have discussed it with Mr. Kanji Dwarakadas. But do you think it is at all possible? I ask you as business people, having regard to your knowledge of the respective conditions of various parts of the Empire, do you think it is at all possible to enter into an arrangement by which the Indian film industry can be encouraged to find an outside market by some such reciprocal arrangement?

A. As regards Imperial Preference my committee's views are given here. I should like to draw your attention to both the Majority and Minority Reports of the Fiscal Commission, particularly to the concluding parts where they say that the free consent of the Legislature must first be obtained before Imperial Preference is adopted. Even the Majority Report says that.

Q. I suppose you have read the proceedings of the Imperial conference held in 1926 on this subject?

A. Only portions of them, but generally I have read whatever appeared in the daily papers. To that we have a very very clear reply in both the Reports, whether you take the Majority or the Minority Report, and I do not think things have changed very materially since then.

Q. I want to confine myself to this film industry, because it is one of the terms of our reference. As you say that you have not read the proceedings of the conference, I shall read it for your benefit. "A further matter to which attention was given during this preliminary discussion was the encouragement of the production and exhibition of Empire films. There was agreement as to the great importance of dealing with this matter, having regard to the influence exerted by the cinema, considered from the general cultural and social point of view, as well as with reference to the development of trade and to its potential value as a means of giving the people of

the various parts of the empire a more vivid realisation of one another's lives and surroundings... (The whole of the extract from the proceedings of the Imperial Conference, 1926, under head XXI—Other economic questions), was read by the Chairman for the benefit of the witness.

Q. So it is in pursuance of that Resolution that this question has been raised, and I am bound to go into it with you?

A. I would say an emphatic No.

Q. I suppose you are familiar with the two objects, one is the protection of trade and the second is the mutual understanding?

A. I would again repeat an emphatic No, on the grounds mentioned.

Q. Do you think it is possible to advance the Indian film industry by adopting any such policy?

A. No, I don't think Imperial Preference will.

Q. Supposing the other parts of the empire take 5 feet of Indian film?

A. Even then I would say No, on various grounds. I think sufficient encouragement to the Indian film industry both as regards production and exhibition could be given if the various suggestions made in our representation are followed. I think that would be enough for the present.

Q. Supposing for every foot of Empire film the other parts of the empire take 5 ft. of Indian film because of the weakness of the Indian partnership.—India is a weak partner, and therefore the others have got more energy, more enterprise and better organization than we can command; on that ground supposing you enter into an agreement that they take 5 ft. of Indian film, what is your objection to it?

A. I cannot take that detached view of Imperial Preference in the way you put it.

Q. You want to connect it with Imperial Preference?

A. It is Imperial Preference, just as quota is Indian preference. Under no circumstances shall I have Imperial Preference of that character.

Q. Even when it is positively advantageous to India?

A. It cannot be advantageous. Even if it were, for the sake of a small industry, I would not like to introduce this broad principle of Imperial Preference, in such a way.

Q. I suppose you are aware that it has been said as a matter of reproach that in regard to the steel industry, Bombay has accepted an Imperial Preference scheme?

A. I don't think so. We were all under the impression then—at least the President of the Select Committee told the Assembly that there was no Imperial Preference at all. Our Chamber, however, disagreed with this view.

Q. If you couple every small industry with that big question of either Swaraj or Imperial Preference or any such thing and hang everything up pending the solution of those great questions, how do you expect India to progress industrially?

A. That is the most important thing for the existence and welfare of the country. The Cinema and road development and other allied questions can wait and can come up later.

Q. Then your answer is that this question might be left alone till the bigger problems are solved?

A. Yes. Even if the cinema industry has to be sacrificed.

Q. Don't you think that such an attitude is likely to create a feeling of unfriendliness?

A. I don't think so.

Q. How do you hope to solve them if you adopt a process of exclusion like that?

A. The gulf of unfriendliness is caused by the exclusion of Indians from the Statutory Commission and various other actions of Government rather than from these small questions of Imperial Preference for the cinema.

Q. I have put some points before you, and having considered them, you think that we ought not to enter into any such arrangement even on the terms I have put forward, namely 5 ft. to 1 ft.

A. I say, No.

Q. There is one other contingency on the other side, namely the possible retaliation by other available markets. Do you think America will be a better customer than England for Indian films?

A. I do not know that.

Q. Do you share the view which a certain gentleman expressed that America will be a better customer than England for Indian films?

A. We have not given that matter special consideration. We mentioned about the licensing system, and I would like to develop it a bit.

Q. If any Government aid is given on the lines suggested by you?

A. Do you call it Government aid?

Q. The quota will be an indirect way?

A. Without any cost to Government.

Q. Then again your tariff will be an aid?

A. That will put some more money into the pockets of the Government, there will be an increase in import duty. The abolition of the import duty on raw material will come to a smaller amount.

Q. How much will we lose do you think?

A. Those details we have not worked out.

Q. You would like it to be confined to companies on the lines suggested by you?

A. For very good and strong reasons we have had news flashed by the press that there were offers to Madan theatres or something of that sort. We can also conceive of a big American or British Syndicate coming out here and producing films here on a large scale. As you were on the Indian Mercantile Marine Committee, you, Sir, know what are our difficulties, once vested interests are allowed to develop. The Mercantile Marine Committee recommended a licensing system, that licenses should be given only to those concerns in which the management was predominantly Indian. That Report did not mention any actual percentage, while we mention that 75 per cent. of the capital and 75 per cent. of the directorate or management must be Indian, so that it should not be possible for an outside Syndicate or big formations to come here and create such monopolies and take away the profits which would be detrimental to the growth of our local industries. Therefore, I am strongly of the opinion that the licensing system should be immediately applied both to producers and manufacturers, and no licence should be given to any producer or exhibitor where the capital and management is not 75 per cent. Indian.

Q. Are you satisfied with the present agencies which are in charge of Indian film production? Are you satisfied with their business capacity? Do you think all their profits are utilised for the expansion of their business, and they show a tendency to improve the quality of the films?

A. On the whole, looking to the times through which we are passing now—we are going through a very serious depression now and it affects all these luxury industries specially,—I think our progress both in production and exhibition is very good.

Q. Do you think the Indian public are satisfied with the class of films produced here and the progress made by the industry generally?

A. Looking to the life of the industry, I think we ought to be satisfied with the progress made by the industry considering the fact that it is only about 7 years now since this industry has been taken up.



Q. You have no apprehension that the industry is in unprogressive hands?

A. On the contrary, the progress has been, if anything very good. I am entirely satisfied with the class of people who produce films. There might of course be some exceptions. There is nothing perfect in this world.

Q. What is your objection to your having external capital if the management and talent are Indian? Perhaps it is an economic question. I say that 75 per cent. or the whole of the talent is Indian and the capital is non-Indian, what is your objection to it?

A. I don't think it is a practical proposition. I don't think any foreigner will bring his money and put it in the hands of Indians.

Q. If he gets a good return?

A. Even assuming that your dream were correct. I don't think it would be a feasible proposition.

Q. You think that Indian capital will be forthcoming?

A. I don't think there is any necessity for external capital, because Indian capital is forthcoming.

Q. It has not come.

A. I am not aware of that; my information is otherwise.

Q. Because you yourself say that some foreign Syndicates are threatening to come to India?

A. That is in order to get the monopoly, but I am not aware of any producers or exhibitors being held up for want of capital.

Q. Do you think the people in the industry will co-operate and get up-to-date studios or give adequate training to their actors and actresses? Do you think the class of people that you now have in the line are likely to co-operate put their energies together and pool their resources to make the industry a flourishing one?

A. So far the industry has done very well here, and left to themselves I have reason to believe that they will do everything possible to advance the cause of the industry, and to combat common grievances.

Q. But it has been suggested that they do not co-operate?

A. I have got a good precedent in the Indian Mercantile Marine Committee's recommendations.....

Q. Don't tell me about it, I am rather disappointed with the treatment meted out by Government to that report.

Mr. Green: Do you visit cinemas in Bombay frequently?

A. I can't say frequently.

Q. How often do you visit them?

A. During the last month, since the appointment of this Committee, I think I have seen more, but I cannot say that I am a frequent visitor to the cinemas.

Q. I believe you have seen both Indian and western films?

A. Yes.

Q. I gather from your reply to our Chairman that you are perfectly satisfied with the present production of Indian films?

A. Yes, taking into consideration all the difficulties.

Q. You would like them to be further improved?

A. Yes.

Q. Now, I am not opposed in any way to an increase in the customs tariff, but I do want you to examine the effect of it. An Indian witness who appeared before us to-day was opposed to raising the tariff on various grounds. Several witnesses have told us that if Indian film production is properly organized, it will find a ready and exclusive market in India irrespective of any protection. They further apprehend that if we give a high protection to Indian films under the tariff it will cause stagnation in the industry, and

they will not improve the films from the profits they will make. The other view has also been put forward that it will help production. What is your view?

A. As regards stagnation, the history of America, where high tariff walls have been placed, is different. There has been no stagnation there. Improvements have gone on, if anything, with greater vigour when profits were assured.

Q. I think it is your view that the present films produced in Bombay are already a paying proposition. Assuming that to be your view, do you think there will be any incentive for producers to turn out better films?

A. Certainly, with bigger profits they might be able to produce far better films. But they can't afford to spend enough money on technique, but with increased protection they will certainly be able to improve their films. There is great room for expansion of the industry, and that will be done if protection is given. I may in this connection cite the example of the cement industry.

Q. Has not that industry developed rather too fast?

A. Yes, we are in a position to produce about 600,000 tons to-day, and we can consume the whole quantity. Any amount of capital is forthcoming, and the cement industry which went up to the Tariff Board only two years ago for protection, is now doing very well. Any amount of capital is forthcoming for duplications and for new factories.

Q. I don't think there is great analogy to the cinema industry?

A. That applies to stagnation and to the question of giving protection.

Q. Was the cement industry protected?

A. I call the war prices an indirect, spasmodic huge protection.

Q. Is that not an example of over production?

A. I am not advocating 100 per cent. or anything of the sort.

Q. So your proposal is that the duty should be raised to ten times the present rate?

A. We ought to have amplified this ourselves. What we had in mind was this. Sometimes six copies are imported, and they were intended for distribution. So really it won't come to ten times. If there are six copies, it will come to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  times.

Q. How are the customs people to know how many copies are imported?

A. That is a detail. If you so desire, we will think about it and get into touch with the trade and send you a supplementary statement.

Q. I should be very much interested to have it.

A. Yes, we can send you a supplementary statement.

Q. Would you also consider whether it would not be possible to have a specific duty rather than a duty on tariff valuation?

A. We will consider that point also.

Q. Now, I take you on the question of censorship. I gather from your statement that you are quite satisfied with the present method of censorship?

A. Yes. On the whole, I am generally satisfied.

Q. You would not like to see the Board expanded?

A. It should be made more representative.

Q. Do you suggest that the Board should continue to conduct its examination of films through their paid officers?

A. Yes.

Q. You don't think that the members themselves, except in cases of dispute, should examine the films?

A. I don't think it will be a practical proposition to expect those busy men to examine each and every film.

Q. It has been urged on us very strongly that no film should be passed unless two members of the Board have personally inspected the film. Do you think it would be possible to get gentlemen of sufficient experience, education and general ability to undertake that work? Witness after witness has told me, to my surprise, that they thought that they could arrange it. I put it to you that people are too busy in Bombay to do it, and you are strongly of that opinion?

A. Yes.

Colonel Crawford: From a business point of view, I have gathered the impression from some of the witnesses who have appeared before us, that there is a market for a cheaply produced film costing, say, anything between Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 20,000, but the moment you go beyond that in the production of a film, it is very doubtful whether the Indian market is adequate to give a reasonable return on the money expended? What is your view on that?

A. I would rather leave it to the trade as I have not gone into it.

Q. We have 320 million people in India, and it would appear to me that there must be great scope for expansion?

A. There is any amount of scope, but whether Rs. 10,000 or Rs. 20,000 is the limit of production of a film, that was the question.....

Q. The point is whether the public in the mofussil at the present moment is prepared to pay for such entertainments remunerative rates?

A. They do appreciate good films, and they are prepared to pay reasonable price suited to their pockets. They do not expect a very high class or special film.

Q. Is it a commercial proposition, I mean the exploitation of that big market?

A. I would not call it exploitation.

Q. On page 2 of your statement you say "My Committee do not approve of any Government action, whether legislative or administrative". Now, in Germany I understand they have a very fine studio for the production of films of entertainment value with a definite educational bias, that is to say, an educational subject worked out in the film by a story. Have you any objection to Government in India undertaking the production of educational films of that nature with a view to the training of the personnel, both technical as well as acting, directing, etc., for the production of educational films?

A. I would rather not have Government do anything on those lines. I think it should be left to private enterprise and to individual municipalities, District Boards and Local Boards. Even many small Indian States have done it. The Provincial Governments directly or indirectly have paid for films or given facilities to the railways to make those films to be shown in schools and to agriculturists. So at this stage I would rather not expect Government to do anything in this direction, particularly the Imperial Government to take any action on those lines.

Q. You would let the Local Government do it locally? You have no objection to the local Government taking steps of that nature? Supposing you have a growing cinema industry, there is no reason why the local Government should not take steps to encourage that industry?

A. But I would not expect the Cinema Committee to say so; that the Local Government shall do these things. Leave it to their good sense to decide on the merits of their own particular case.

Q. You would not have the committee recommend Government assisting in any way whatsoever?

A. I would leave the whole thing to private enterprise. Follow Lord Inchcape's dictum,—we have had too much government interference in these things,—and leave it to private enterprise.

Q. Well, we have had the suggestion made that the present producers are too much in a groove and that possibly the example of a government-run

show with all the latest technique, undertaking the production of films that it wants for educational purposes might be an inspiration to them and give an impetus to the development of the industry.

A. I don't agree in the first place that they are more or less in the same groove but even if they were so, I would not advocate any government central institution or college or laboratory.

Q. Not even a local one?

A. No.

Q. Is that generally on the ground of the business man's position that he is against government trading on principle?

A. That is one of the reasons.

Q. I notice in your answer to No. 27B you are very strongly of the opinion that any films which misrepresent India should be proscribed.

A. Yes.

Q. May I take it that you would be against any misrepresentation on the films. Take, for instance, religious subjects. You would be against definite misrepresentation of religious subjects on the film and therefore you would be inclined to say to the censors: it is your duty to stop misrepresentation.

A. Whether it is on religious grounds or historical or moral.

Q. That misrepresentation should be stopped. But in this connection I forgot one point. I understand in some of the foreign countries films depicting Indian life are produced and shown some of them not correct or true to Indian life which rather lower them. Would you like the Cinema Committee to recommend that the various consuls in the various countries should take steps to see that in foreign countries such films are not shown misrepresenting Indian character, life or tradition or lowering Indian character or traditions?

Chairman: Can you give us any instance of this kind of false and lowering misrepresentation?

A. Yes. A gentleman who had been to Germany year before last told me of some instances that had occurred in Germany. I can give you the details later on, if you like.

Colonel Crawford: You don't know the country of origin of these films?

A. Germany.

Q. Are you aware that the German representatives here have made representations with regard to the misrepresentation of Germany in India?

A. I am not aware of that, but it may be by non-Indian films.

Q. And you would suggest our diplomatic agents doing the same?

A. Yes, and we will respond.

Q. If there is any misrepresentation of German or American or British life here, we should not encourage it?

A. Quite.

Q. Now I go to the question of the foreign market. You are very strongly against Imperial preference but what suggestion would you, as a business man, make to the committee as to the possibility of opening up the foreign market to the trade? Can you give us an idea of a practical method of doing this?—cutting out Imperial preference.

A. I think we have not gone into figures. This increased duty on films will bring in some additional revenue which might be given as a bounty or subsidy for films shown abroad by way of concessions in sea freights or insurance or possibly a direct bounty to films which are shown abroad. Something of that sort.

Q. Nothing in the nature of government agency to push our films in the foreign market?

A. Yes. Our Trade Commissioner, Mr. Lindsay, might help and the Trade Commissioner perhaps to be appointed at Mozambique and Mombasa should be able to help.

**Q.** Do you think we can develop something of that nature?

**A.** Yes, but I am not very keen about the chances of a big market there. Let us first develop our local Indian market, which is easy, more economical and more natural.

**Q.** When I go down to the question of the quota system, I have heard some of these exhibitors who exhibit only Indian films on the score of their being the most popular, complain that they have to run a film two or sometimes three weeks, which is not in itself a paying proposition, because they cannot get an adequate number of films to make a change. Now is the industry in your opinion to-day capable of taking up a quota? I mean it is no good our putting on a quota if we cannot produce films to fill it.

**A.** If the statement made to you that they have to run a film for two or three weeks for want of a sufficient supply is correct, it seems slightly in the nature of a vicious circle. Unless you give that encouragement by insisting on a quota, you won't get the number of films. The reason for having this quota is to do away with the difficulty which the trade is experiencing.

**Q.** Well now, take a film like "Sacrifice." It does not seem to have been shown in what I would call the cinemas catering for educated audiences in Bombay.

**A.** I differ there. I wouldn't call the Imperial or the Majestic audiences uneducated. They are cultured.

**Q.** But if you wanted to display a film which you thought would attract an educated audience, what cinema would you prefer to select?

**A.** Well, I have myself many times gone and have seen many educated people going to the Majestic and the Imperial. If you take the percentage of Indian intellectual people, particularly Hindus or Muhammadans, in the Excelsior and the Empire you will find the percentage very small. Take a glance at the house in either of these theatres—I have been myself two or three times during the last month,—and you will find the number of cultured Indians, Hindu or Muhammadan, in either of these theatres is extremely small. I am excluding Parsis, and the class which visits the Girgaum theatre, which is the residential quarter of the educated Gujarati and Maharastras. These films at the Majestic and the Imperial are visited by that intellectual and cultured class. There might be in the pit some uneducated people but that will always be there and elsewhere.

**Q.** I wanted your opinion because I gather that there are possibly four theatres up in the Fort which cater to educated audiences and there may be some difficulty in getting an Indian film shown at these theatres.

**A.** I don't agree there. Any time the Cinema Committee could visit these theatres, particularly the Excelsior and Empire, and they will find that there are very few Hindus and Muhammadans.

**Chairman :** By educated I think they have in mind people more or less who have adopted western fashions. That is apparently what they have in mind.

**A.** And people at the very top. It is not the middle class or the upper middle class. But the topmost class in Bombay. We are not catering for them and their number is a nominal fraction.

**Colonel Crawford :** You don't think it is worth exploiting these audiences? I want to come down to the Indian. Is there money to be obtained from audiences attending those theatres?—Good money?

**A.** In the Excelsior and the Empire? Possibly not on Indian films.

**Q.** It all depends whether the Indian films are suited to the taste of the audience. Have such been produced yet in any appreciable number?

**A.** No, not yet.

**Q.** Do you think there is any difficulty getting an Indian film of any suitable standard shown here?

**A.** I don't believe there is any difficulty.

**Q.** The difficulty is in the production of the film. Once the film has been produced, is there any difficulty in getting it exhibited?

**A.** I have no knowledge.

**Q.** I think your position was made very clear as regards your answer to question 45, where you want any producing companies in India given a special licence, with the purpose that 75 per cent. personnel and 75 per cent. capital should be Indian. Suppose again that it was found convenient, with a view to giving a spur to the Indian producing industry, to bring in new methods by inviting or letting a foreign company come here under certain very restricted conditions, some of which you have mentioned, with which I agree, would you tie yourself down so much to the 75 per cent. personnel and 75 per cent. capital or would you rather tie yourself down and say, "Well, I will give you a position for a certain number of years and then I will insist on a certain proportion."

**A.** No, I will strictly follow mine. We have had experience of such concessions, over which we are very sore. I am sorry. And we don't want to repeat that. The Mercantile Marine Committee itself said "predominantly Indian" and we will define that by saying 75 per cent. capital and 75 per cent. directorate Indian. They can get in the 25 per cent. the technical expert knowledge or if he insists on being a managing director in that 25 per cent. he can be so.

**Q.** I was not thinking so much of getting that. But you lay down a special type of limitation which you would put on. You don't think a time limitation is a possible alternative?

**A.** No. I would start straight off with it, before we give room for vested interests to grow up. My first step would be to get this.

*Chairman:* Do we understand that there will be a graduated rise of Indian personnel?

*Colonel Crawford:* I am in agreement on the personnel, but supposing it appeared to us advantageous to bring in technical assistance from a foreign country with a view to giving a lead to our industry here and we could not get it on the terms of 75 per cent. capital and 75 per cent. personnel, I want to know whether a time limit can be considered as an alternative?

**A.** No, I would not give any time limit. Because I think the technique if necessary can be accommodated in the 25 per cent. If it is in the interests of the company that he should be given the position of managing director, he can be given that.

**Q.** You think those terms are just as attractive?

**A.** Just as safe. Sufficiently attractive to get what we want.

**Q.** I have not been putting my questions from that point of view but from the other point of view. To save the Indian industry from being swamped or from going into the hands of a powerful foreign syndicate. The 25 per cent. concession will give them what they require. As regards technique, 25 per cent. in the directorate ought to get the technical assistance from outside, if we want it.

Would you be in favour of any system of state scholarships to give Indians an opportunity to get technical training abroad?

**A.** No, I don't think it is necessary.

**Q.** Does your 75 per cent. capital mean rupee capital?

**A.** Oh, necessarily. It must be a rupee company.

**Q.** But can foreigners bring their capital into India and then put it into the film industry?

**A.** When I say Indian I mean not British Indian. It must be rupee capital and subscribed by Indians.

**Oral Evidence of SETH WALCHAND HIRACHAND, President,  
Indian Merchants' Chamber, on Wednesday, the 16th November  
1927.**

*Mr. Walchand Hirachand:* I want to make one or two points clear in view of the way in which they have appeared in the press. The first is about Imperial preference being accepted by the Assembly. The only thing reported in the papers is that my Committee protested against it. As I said yesterday, the Government and Sir Charles Innes said that it was not Imperial preference. The President of the Select Committee, Mr. Jinnah, said also that it was not. That might be the reason why a portion of the Assembly voted for it. They believed because the Government gave a solemn assurance that it was not and that they did not mean that to be Imperial preference, and the leader of the Independent Party who is an elected member and who presided over the Joint Select Committee also thought so. That is not mentioned. The other point is when I replied to the question that even if it is 5 to 1 feet I would not agree to Imperial preference, the impression given is that because I am fixed in my mind or I am prejudiced I am saying so—I did mention that my reasons are more or less the same as those mentioned in both the minority and majority reports of the Fiscal Commission. The majority report reasons are most of them economic; in the minority report there is one political, there might be also sentimental reasons, but there are also economic reasons. If you like I will go into the economic reasons, but I do not want to have any impression conveyed that I am against Imperial preference because I have got a prejudice and I am fixed in that view. There are strong economic reasons in addition to political and sentimental reasons and some weight must be attached to these too. That is why I am against Imperial preference.

*Mr. Neogy:* I think I may take your general attitude to be this, that the film industry must stand on its own legs?

A. Yes.

Q. And in order to secure a market abroad our pictures must improve in quality so as to have a competitive value of their own?

A. Yes.

Q. And that you are not in favour of any spoon feeding by Government or any sort of Government interference which might be accompanied by undesirable results?

A. Yes.

Q. That I take more or less to be your position?

A. Except that the protection which I advocate by way of licensing system, or increased import duties, or abolition of duty on raw materials.....

Q. Or assistance to be given by Trade Commissioners abroad by way of getting our films known to the foreign countries?

A. Yes.

Q. You certainly consider that it would be desirable for the film industry to secure a foreign market?

A. Yes.

Q. But I think you consider that competition would be the only way of improving the quality of the films?

A. Yes.

Q. You do not want, I take it, any artificial protection to be given, or rather any attempt to find an artificial market abroad?

A. Yes.

Q. Which may not be justified by the merits of the goods themselves at the present time?

A. Yes.

*Q.* Supposing an arrangement could be entered into with the other parts of the Empire under which India could send out five feet of film for each foot that might be coming from that part of the Empire—would you consider that to be a real help to the industry?

*A.* In the first place, the hypothesis is purely imaginary, and I do not think there is any chance of any one allowing five feet to one foot. I think, if I may say so, it is purely imaginary.

*Chairman:* It was a purely hypothetical question.

*A.* Even then I am afraid there is a risk of retaliation on the part of non-Empire countries, such as, Germany, America and others.

*Mr. Neogy:* But if any such attempt were made to create an artificial market abroad—do you think that would lead to any improvement in the quality? Would there be any incentive for the trade to improve its quality so that it might stand on its own legs?

*A.* On the whole, taking this imaginary hypothesis as a practical proposition, I do not think, taking the various circumstances, the fear of retaliation on the part of other countries, coming up to the taste of those countries, and the stories of our films—I do not think there is much to be gained by any such reciprocity with the Empire.

*Q.* But if a market like that could be assured, would there be any incentive left to the trade to improve the quality of the goods? If they were assured of a market like that which they could get merely as a result of an understanding with the Empire irrespective of the question of merits, would that lead to any improvement in the quality at all? Would there be any natural tendency to improvement?

*A.* Basing it on something quite imaginary, I do not think it is practical politics at all. Why draw conclusions if it were so, then what next? I had rather not.

*Q.* What I wanted to ask you is this. If they could be assured of a market which they could command irrespective of the quality of the film they manufacture, would there be any incentive left for any improvement at all?

*A.* Before I reply to that question, I should like to see a definite concrete scheme.

*Q.* You say you are not prepared to make any statement without considering all the various details of any such scheme?

*A.* Yes. I do not think the dominions will be so generous as to allow us anything of the sort unless they are going to get it out of us somewhere else in some other form. I would like to have a full concrete scheme from them and not from us, and then let us see.

*Q.* Do you think the present quality of the films to be very high?

*A.* There is room, as I mentioned yesterday, for improvement, but the development that has taken place during the last 5 or 7 years is very encouraging.

*Q.* I do not know whether you think the quality of the films is so high at the present time as to enable it to secure a market in foreign countries in competition with the best western films?

*A.* Except curiosity. If America and Germany want to know something about Indian dresses, or habits, or scenery, some special films could be selected, but that would have a very limited market.

*Q.* Do you think if means were found to make the present type of films known to the other parts of the world, it might lead to a prejudice in the end?

*A.* I think so. I had rather not attempt the present type of films to be sent to other countries.

*Q.* Whether they want them or not? It might lead to undesirable results in the end instead of helping the industry?

*A.* Yes.



*Q.* And you expect the industry to stand on its own legs and then try to secure a foreign market; you would not be willing to take any risk in this matter?

*A.* No. It is just like sending a medicine which has passed only half through its stages in the laboratory, to the market, or passing some goods half finished and still in the laboratory stage, to the market and getting a permanent prejudice against it.

*Chairman:* Would your answer be different if the goods were good?

*A.* Yes. I did say we might make a few exceptions and select films—I did say that. But the question I understand was, in the present stage of our film industry is there any point in sending out films which are bound to create a prejudice against them. My answer is, I would rather not send them.

*Mr. Neogy:* That is to say, you would leave it to the judgment of the present producers, without imposing any good, bad or indifferent Indian films on the foreign market?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* You would select the best films and send them out and you would depend on the trade for doing the necessary thing for that purpose?

*A.* What was done in the coal industry? The coal that was sent was very inferior coal and it got a very bad name, and we lost our markets. Then the Grading Board was set up who said that only particular coal with particular stamp as regards its quality such as, 1st class, or 2nd class or 3rd class, shall be sent. So we ought to be wiser after that experience which we have bought so expensively.

*Q.* Beyond that you do not want any other impetus to be given?

*A.* No, not at this stage.

*Q.* For the purpose of securing a foreign market?

*A.* No.

*Q.* Have you seen the Bill that is now before Parliament about the quota system?

*A.* Not the whole Bill. I read extracts of it from various papers.

*Q.* Are you aware that when the Bill was originally introduced the quota that was sought to be imposed by it was only of pictures manufactured in Great Britain by British talents and British capital, and that in the Standing Committee the scope of the quota has been expanded to cover films manufactured within the British Empire with the assistance of British subjects residing in any part of the Empire.

*A.* I think there is a further modification in to-day's or yesterday's papers. There is something further about that.

*Q.* In this morning's papers it is stated that it is proposed to confine the Bill to 10 years only. I am confining myself to the Empire aspect of the change. Do you think that India ought to make a response to that gesture?

*A.* When a piece of the Imperial Conference resolution was read out to me yesterday I wanted to know whether India had any proper say in that Imperial conference, whether we were properly represented and whether our representatives, if they were elected members of the Assembly, had any voice.

*Q.* There I do not suppose that India was at all committed to anything. It was a resolution calling upon India and other parts of the Empire.....

*Chairman:* Nor did any other part of the Empire commit itself.

*A.* It was a suggestion on the part of interested parties or parties who believed in the efficacy of that thing, not on behalf of Indian representatives. May I know who represented India at that Imperial Conference?

*Q.* Surely you know that. Mr. Chadwick

*A.* No elected member or no Indian?

*Q.* No. You know that.

A. I was confusing two or three Imperial Conferences. Then that does not count with us at all. That does not carry any weight whatever with us.

Mr. Neogy: When the Bill was first introduced the benefit of the quota was sought to be confined only to Great Britain and to the people of Great Britain. In the Standing Committee that provision was widened to bring in the whole of the Empire. Now for the purpose of the quota system which is going to be imposed on the theatres in Great Britain, even Indian pictures would be deemed to be British pictures. Do you think that India ought to respond to this gesture, as I call it?

A. No.

Q. You do not think that there is any practical difference in the change at all?

A. I have not studied the whole thing. But *prima facie* I do not think we should try to reciprocate at this stage on the information that we have got.

Q. It was stated by a witness yesterday that of all countries in the world including the other parts of the Empire, the only countries which possess a curiosity to know other kinds of civilisation than their own, and particularly Indian civilisation, are Germany, America and France.

A. I agree. The people of Germany are the best of the lot. A Sanskrit Chair was, I think, first instituted in Germany. We have many of our Sanskrit Ph. D's from Germany, and they in Germany are very anxious to know all oriental and Indian civilisation, culture, habits and traditions.

Mr. Coatsman: Oxford was the first to institute a Chair in Sanskrit.

Mr. Green: "The Boden".

A. But my information.....

Mr. Green: We are two against one.

Mr. Neogy: On this ground that particular witness stated that our future market for the Indian film industry would be those three countries more than any other,—more than any other part of the Empire.

A. I agree with that.

Q. From that point of view he said no action should be taken which might jeopardise these potential markets of the Indian film industry?

A. I agree.

Q. You are perhaps aware that of all countries in the world America has got the largest number of cinema theatres?

A. Yes.

Q. It is given as 20,000 theatres as compared with 4,000 of Great Britain.

A. I think the number is 3,500.

Q. And it is stated that one-fifth of the population of the United States go every day to the cinema.

A. Something of that sort.

Q. From that point of view the United States may be called pre-eminently the market for films generally?

A. Potential market for films.

Q. You won't do anything to prejudice that potential market for Indian films?

A. I won't, no.

Q. Now coming to the question of quota, you are in favour of imposing a quota in India exclusively for the benefit of the Indian manufactured films?

A. Yes.

Q. I think it was put to you whether the present supply would be sufficient for the purpose, whether it would be fair to impose a quota having regard to the present restricted supply?

A. Yes.

*Q.* Do you think that if in view of the alleged restricted supply of Indian films it is not desirable to impose a quota on the Indian theatres, it is reasonable to expect that we will have the necessary supply if in addition to any such quota a scheme is formulated under which films would have to be sent abroad under a sort of Empire quota? Would the supply be sufficient for that purpose?

*A.* We have suggested it might begin in 1930, if possible earlier. By that time I think we ought to. If Great Britain which manufactures, say, only about 5 per cent. and American film production is 95 per cent.—if it still thinks it can expect to have 7½ per cent. quota in 1930, we who are roughly manufacturing about 40 per cent. to-day should, I think, reasonably be able to find the quota. I do not think there will be any scarcity even if necessary we want to send anything outside.

*Q.* Your first ambition is to see as much of the home market supplied with Indian films as possible before looking to any other part of the world for market?

*A.* Naturally.

*Q.* How would you relieve those people who are showing exclusively foreign pictures and who say that if you are to impose an Indian quota they would lose their custom to that extent?

*A.* They have to face this if they are Indians and have any regard for Indian economics and for Indian industry. They will have to face this, and I think their chances are good too. I think the number preferring only western films on the whole would be small comparatively when the industry is properly developed. We will have to insist, whether they like it or not, on this 7½ per cent.

*Q.* Do you include the European audiences when you say that?

*A.* Certainly, every theatre.

*Q.* The European audiences must be made to see Indian films?

*A.* At least it should be necessary to exhibit them. Where they have European audiences they might come in a bit late, say, 15 minutes late. The cinema shows last 90 minutes, it can be increased to 105 minutes and the first 15 minutes can be used for the quota. As one of the western theatre proprietors told me, he said, "I will begin the 6-30 show at 6-15 and show the Indian quota first, so that those who do not want to see it may come late, and in the night I will show the Indian quota the last, so that those who do not want to see it may go away early".

*Q.* You are thinking then of pictures of smaller length?

*A.* This 7½ per cent. quota will necessarily make it so. If they want to meet just the requirement of the legislation they will have to be short lengths. If we take an average of 6,000 feet, 7½ per cent. of it gives 450 feet or a fifteen minute run.

*Q.* You think that pictures of shorter length will come to be manufactured for the benefit of these exhibitors, and they would not be hit hard?

*A.* I believe so. Even now we have got very many short pictures, 400 or 500 feet long.

*Mr. Green:* Indian ones?

*A.* Yes, even comic.

*Q.* I have not seen one yet.

*A.* In war days there was a very good Hindustan film, in 1917-1918. Not one but dozens, trick photography, comic, a variety of short films, 450, 500 or 700 feet lengths. They are anxious to show the Committee some of them. As regards the technique, I would like to mention that it is superb comparatively and about the best photography you can get here. The originator went out three times to America. He is a professionally equipped, educated, cultured man. He found no difficulty in getting finances. Even in those days immediately he asked of high class cultured society in Bombay the capital he wanted—he wanted about 2 lakhs or 2½ lakhs—he got it from two

or three people alone. They are all quite happy and the concern is doing very well.

*Mr. Neogy:* That would be one way of testing the merits of a particular film from the point of view of its suitability for a European audience?

A. Yes.

Q. And if we are anxious to impose our films on foreign countries, I think you could reasonably expect that Europeans living in this country would supply the test by the response they make to our films?

A. Yes, that is the severest test. Possibly the American or the German would not be so severe.

Q. You would say to them "Give an earnest of your interest in Indian films by not keeping away from these theatres in the Fort area where Indian films may be exhibited, and then we will consider your offer about an Empire quota"?

A. Right.

Q. You do not want the intervention of the Government of India in the matter of the manufacture of educational films or films which might be taken up for any sort of propaganda work?

A. By intervention I understood that Government should manufacture. I do not want Government to undertake any manufacturing.

Q. Supposing the Government of India were to entrust the work of actual manufacture to private manufacturers of films, the Government supplying the necessary scenario, do you object to that?

A. We have said in the first place such Government orders should necessarily go to Indian producers, and not as has happened in the Education Department. My Primary Vernacular Education book had to be published by Macmillan or the "Times of India". Even if shabbily printed I would rather have it printed and published by a purely Indian firm.

*Mr. Coatman:* Even at the cost of damaged eye-sight?

A. At any cost. If the Government do undertake to patronise these films, it should be given to Indian produced films. They are not so bad as to damage your eye-sight.

*Mr. Green:* Provided they are not bad for the sight. Mr. Coatman was referring to the printing of books.

*Mr. Neogy:* Textbooks are as a matter of fact printed by Indians very cheaply. Now what do you say to the idea that has been put forward that foreign films marked "educational" should be admitted either duty free, or at reduced customs rates?

A. No. I would try and manufacture these things myself to suit Indian conditions and the needs of Indian children; otherwise the so-called educational film from outside will have some such thing as "the cow has no soul". No, my children want something quite different and it should necessarily be manufactured locally. You remember Howard's First Primer. There we were taught that "the cow has no soul". At least I was taught. We do not want such educational films to be shown to our children any more.

Q. And you would depend entirely on the provincial Ministers to take the initiative?

A. Yes.

Q. He must not be dictated to by anybody from Delhi or Simla?

A. No.

Q. And he must have the right to make his own choice?

A. Right.

Q. Don't you think it might be economical for the Central Government to undertake either the manufacture or the supply of films to all the Local Governments.

A. In the first place why should Government land itself into business? I do not think the Government should try to do that. It cannot be done economically or efficiently. That was Sir Charles's objection to taking over the railways. It is an admitted principle that a State cannot run business as economically as a private agency can. We have had examples in the Postal Department and the Telephones taken away by the London Postmaster General. This is admitted. They did want to take over the management of these railways. Then why in an undertaking like this, which we think can be manufactured and is being manufactured actually to the extent of 40 per cent., should Government interest themselves at all and put themselves into unfair competition with private manufacturers?

*Chairman:* Can you tell us whether any private agency has manufactured any single educational film.

A. I can give you instances. For patrons, for constituents, yes. I think the Hindustan Film Producing Company manufacture for the Baroda State.

Q. But not for themselves.

Mr. Neogy: What we want to know is whether educational films, strictly so-called would be a paying proposition from the manufacturer's point of view. If they were to manufacture such films, would they draw if they were shown at the public theatres?

A. Well, you will have to go into the figures.

Q. I want to understand whether the failure on the part of the present manufacturers to turn out educational films is due to any fear that it may not be a remunerative proposition, unless of course they were asked to manufacture by some patron or customer.

A. I would like you to ask that question of a man in the trade.

Q. And whatever financial assistance is necessary for the production of educational films, you think that the Provincial Governments should be depended on to find the money.

A. By financial assistance I suppose is meant the price of the film. If the film is to be made and the price is  $x$  annas per foot run, the Provincial Government, whether in the Education, Medical or Agriculture Department, pays for it and shows it in its various schools.

Q. You do not want a subvention from the Government of India in any shape or form so far as the manufacture of educational films is concerned?

A. No.

Q. It was put to you that mass education through films will have to wait because we have not got funds enough for primary education.

A. Adult education—that is what was referred to.

Q. Even then you would not be prepared to ask for any subvention from the Government of India?

A. I would like to have a definition of mass education. If what is meant is the film as a general instructor for broadening of the viewpoint, films in general, I do not think it will be delayed. If you have something particular in view in the line of education, something very restricted which may not be a business proposition pure and simple for film manufacturers, in that case the particular transferred department concerned does come in.

Mr. Chairman: You have the development of the Indian film industry obviously very much at heart.

A. Yes.

Q. I will ask you just a few questions about the possibilities of America as a market for Indian films. You know that America is not a free trade country.

A. Yes.

Q. Have you considered the tariff barrier as an obstacle to the circulation of Indian films in America?

A. I put that as a secondary, as a potential market, when it is further developed. I think, Mr. Neogy got those answers from me. Primarily I

look to the development of the industry in India. When we come to a better type of film and more palatable to Americans, then if the tariff barrier is not too high and it pays us we will go there.

Q. What I mean is you have considered the tariff barrier as an obstacle?

A. In general yes. Whether Indian films in particular will have a high tariff wall to contend against I don't know.

Q. Do you know that America has carried the principle of protection of home industry further than any country in the world.

A. I know it is a protected country, a country with a protection policy. Whether it has carried it further than other countries, I have not made a comparative study of all countries to be able to say.

### **Written Statement of the Committee of the Maharashtra Chamber of Commerce, dated Bombay, the 9th November 1927.**

In response to the invitation by the Cinematograph Inquiry Committee appointed by the Government of India with a view to examine the question of the Cinema film industry in this country in all its aspects my Committee proposes here in this short statement just to broadly indicate the lines (without entering much into details) on which this industry can be encouraged.

2. My Committee records its disapproval of the composition of the Inquiry Committee, inasmuch as there is not a clear majority of Indians on it. In the absence of such a majority, my Committee is afraid even an Indian Chairman will be able to accomplish very little with all his desire to do something really helpful to this industry.

#### *Intelligent Censorship is essential—The Board of Censors.*

3. My Committee do plead for an intelligent and rigorous censorship of foreign cinema films casting reflection either, directly or indirectly, on India's civilization or culture and a total exclusion of those when they do so. Indian traditions and ideas being in many respects different from those of the Westerners, such censorship is essential in the best interests of this country. My Committee would however like to suggest that the constitution of the Censors' Board and their method of work as at present obtaining, are not satisfactory and that there is scope for improvement in them. They can be made more satisfactory if the Board of Censors is so constituted as to include therein representatives from the manufacturers, exhibitors and dealers in cinema films, and also representatives of the press, the public, the University and Indian Chambers of Commerce. The Board should be reconstituted every three years. My Committee believes that there is no necessity for the creation of a Central Board of Censors either in place of the existing Boards or in addition to them. It has further to be suggested that a film once passed by a Board of Censors in one place should ordinarily be allowed to run everywhere in India and Burma except when there is sufficient justification for its disallowance on account of local situation, and in cases of such disallowance, the disallowing authority should state the reasons for its action for future guidance of manufacturers and exhibitors.

#### *Inspectors should be men with higher education.*

4. The Office of the Inspector should be there but there should be two Inspectors instead of one and they should both be essentially Indians of higher literary education. They should report separately to the Board and copies of their reports should be made available to the producers. No fees should be charged as at present at least for films of Indian production,

for examination. My Committee has further to suggest that the work of Censors Board should be more expeditious than at present when an appeal is made to them.

5. My Committee like to emphasise the need of intelligent censorship from the point of view of Indian traditions and customs. Historical and Mythological films—especially the Historical ones must even be more leniently treated so long as they do not pervert or violate the well-known Historical facts. Since the roots of the present lie deep in the past every attempt to throw light on history deserves to be encouraged. In a word intelligent censorship and enlightened public opinion (and this latter can often serve as a guide to the Censors) are sufficient to maintain a healthy tone for the cinema films. The present arrangements for censorship with the changes proposed are sufficient in my Committee's opinion to meet the requirements of the situation and they would neither unreasonably interfere with the recreation of the people nor involve a falling off of attendance at the cinemas nor come in the way of artistic development of the art.

*Who should be allowed to produce films.*

6. Licenses should only be issued to film manufacturing and film exhibiting concerns when they have a rupee capital with not less than 75 per cent. of it owned by Indians and when their directorate contains not less than three-fourths Indian element. Such an arrangement has now become all the more necessary in view of the experience gained in connection with the Match Industry in this country, the interests whereof have not been a little adversely affected on account of powerful foreign combine.

7 It is further to be suggested, and my Committee has well considered the matter, that the import duty on imported cinema films should be substantially raised with a view to give an impetus to the industry of indigenous cinema film production. This is absolutely necessary in the present stage of the Indian cinema film industry until it develops sufficient strength.

*Import duty on raw films should be taken away.*

8. My Committee has further to urge the immediate abolition of the import duty of 15 per cent. on raw cinema films. These are not likely to be manufactured in this country for a considerable time to come and will have therefore to be necessarily imported. The manufacturer of films should be free to use materials of any country he likes and finds suitable for his purpose on account of their quality and cost.

9. There should be no interference on the part of the State in this industry. Nor is my Committee in favour of a State monopoly for this industry. It should be left to private enterprise as at present. Its progress is fair, regard being had to the circumstances under which it is making its way, and there is every reason to believe that it will be in keeping with the demand in time to come. Producers, actors, actresses, scenario-writers and a troop of other men with resourcefulness and adaptability will come forth in course of time and capital also will be forthcoming when the industry becomes more stable as a consequence of the measures suggested. Cinema films can be used with very great advantage especially for the education of the masses in public health and hygiene. They can be used to rouse popular interest in industrial matters. Our industrial workers can see how workers in factories of other advanced countries work with skill and diligence. Cinema films can also be used in making history-teaching attractive to school boys by enabling them to visualise things they cannot possibly see. It is very doubtful how far the use of the cinema films would be justified by the results in respect of agricultural propaganda for modern methods of farming, knowing as we do the extreme poverty of the Indian farmer and the smallness of the size of agricultural holdings in general in this country.

*Imperial preference not wanted.*

10. Lastly my Committee has to protest emphatically against any attempt at the introduction of the principle of Imperial preference—it is immaterial whether it is attempted to be done in a sly, or open and aboveboard manner. My Committee believes that the policy of Imperial preference is detrimental to the best interests of this country at this stage of its industrial development. Preference to the British Empire Films means in this particular case nothing but preference to the cinema films produced in Britain under the present circumstances of the cinema film industry in the Empire. Leaders of Indian economic thought have always systematically opposed the introduction of this principle of Imperial preference and my Committee is in accord with that view. We already know Britain, her people, and their life fairly well on account of our contact with them for over hundred and fifty years. What we therefore need to-day is a knowledge of the life and peoples of other nations like Germany, France, Russia and the United States of America, etc. As regards the self-governing parts of the British Empire, no reasonable objection can be taken, if their several Governments are anxious to acquaint Indians with the political, social and industrial conditions of their countries at their own expense. Such a move they are welcome to make, if they so elect. The mass of people in India cannot simply appreciate Western films and the educated classes, who can, will not generally like to be restricted in their choice and this will surely be the result, if the so called British Empire films are thrust upon India. My Committee gives it as its considered opinion that such preference will be injurious to the interests of this nascent cinema film industry. My Committee therefore has no suggestions to make for putting the policy of Imperial preference into practice; neither has it any measures to suggest with a view to secure the co-operation of the self-governing members of the British Empire.

**Oral Evidence of Mr. M. L. DAHANUKAR and Mr. B. S. DABKE,  
representing the Maharashtra Chamber of Commerce, on Wednesday, the 16th December 1927.**

*Chairman:* I forget your name.

A. Mr. Dahanukar.

Q. And you are accompanied by?

A. Mr. Dabke, a member of our committee who is interested in the film industry. He belongs to the Hindustan Film Producing Company of Nasik.

Q. Now I think you have been present throughout Mr. Walchand's examination and I want to be as short as possible. You are interested in the production side of the industry?

A. As I have said in my statement I am interested in the broader aspects of this industry economically.

Q. I understand you have travelled in America and in England?

A. Yes and also other countries of Europe.

Q. When you travelled in other parts of the world did you travel with the object of studying the cinema industry?

A. I was merely visiting those countries with some intention of seeing industrial developments of certain kinds.

Q. Did you get any opportunities of seeing the cinema industry in any part of the world?

A. I did not exactly see the industry but I saw some films in some theatres at various places.

Q. You did not go to any studios?



A. No.

Q. You have attended cinema shows in other parts of the world, that is all?

A. Yes.

Q. Are you now interested in the cinema business?

A. Not personally; except as a member of the Chamber.

Q. Is this a chamber connected with the cinema industry?

A. Certainly; there are some members of our committee who are interested in the cinema industry.

Q. What was your object in joining the Chamber?

A. Because I am a business man and our chamber is composed of all sorts of business men.

Q. Whether connected with the cinema or not?

A. Yes, our chamber is a chamber of commerce in general.

Q. Headquarters where?

A. In Bombay.

Q. And now, are you in general agreement with Mr. Walchand's views?

A. Yes, generally.

Q. One aspect of the question on which I would like to have your view is this. Do you think that educational films, public health propaganda films and films of that sort could be safely left to private enterprise?

A. In that connection I would suggest that the entertainment tax which was levied some time back and which was meant for the use of helping towards primary education and which, I understand, has been merged into the general revenue should be separated, and with that money and if necessary some more money, these educational films should be developed and shown as far as possible to people here.

Q. Do you advocate that the Government should do it. Will it be better done if the Government do it?

A. No, I say the Government should take up this question and get the films manufactured by indigenous industrial people here. There should be no State agency or foreign agency to whom this should be entrusted.

Q. No question of foreign agency. The question is of State agency. You don't like it?

A. No.

Q. Even if they were to put up a good studio and appoint experts in that line?

A. No.

Q. I suppose you admit it is necessary to have experts in order to produce good educational films.

A. Certainly.

Q. I suppose you also admit that the present cinema proprietors have not got the necessary experts to produce educational films.

A. I admit it. There is not much demand for such films.

Q. The Government would have on their staff—take for instance Agriculture, Public Health, Education—in these departments the Government would have on their staff already experts who can assist in the production of such films?

A. Yes.

Q. So when you say you must entrust these things to private agencies, do you want private agencies to employ their own experts?

A. In this connection private agencies may be helped by Government in two ways. One is that the Government should think of sending out some Indian students who may be desirous of getting trained in this country

to foreign countries, and when they get expert knowledge of the situation or special knowledge they should be brought back here, and I believe private enterprises will engage them straightaway. Another remedy which I would suggest is that the Government should help with their appliances and other means as suggested also by Mr. Walchand. All this will help the production of such films by private agencies.

*Q.* The present studios are not suited for that purpose?

*A.* To some extent they are but improvement is necessary.

*Q.* In order to produce those films?

*A.* I think so.

*Q.* And you want private agencies to be aided with capital for that purpose in order to equip their studios for that purpose?

*A.* I don't think so.

*Q.* You think they will find the necessary capital.

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* But there are at present a dozen agencies in Bombay. Whom are the Government to choose for that purpose?

*A.* I have not quite understood your point about Government aid.

*Q.* You said you object to Government establishing a studio to manufacture their educational public health propaganda films. You say that work should be entrusted to private agencies.

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Which of the private agencies are you going to choose?

*A.* It can be done by a system of tenders and the cost should be borne by Government.

*Q.* The cost of production?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* So that it is not a commercial proposition to the producer himself.

*A.* No.

*Q.* Therefore the Government will have to use the agencies. Do you think it would be better for the country that the Government should run their own studio?

*A.* No. I think by Government entrusting the work of production to others, private enterprise will be helped and also I think the consequent effect of this will be that private enterprises will also start after some time to manufacture their own educational and hygienic films.

*Q.* You think each studio should manufacture its own educational films and compete with each other?

*A.* No.

*Q.* I suppose there must be some agency to guide and control the production of educational films?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* I suppose the Government is the proper agency for that?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Therefore it won't lead to competition in the trade.

*A.* If tenders are called for, then there will be competition among those who are competent enough to manufacture these films.

*Q.* After getting their tenders accepted they will begin to equip their studios for that purpose although they are not at present equipped for it?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Supposing at the end of the year there is further competition; the lowest tender happens to be not by firm A which got the job last year but firm B gets the tender. He will then equip his studio?

A. That will depend upon the situation. I am myself an engineering contractor of the Government.

Q. That is different.

A. But I am going to tell you, supposing I am asked to do a reinforced concrete job. I buy my plant, tools, machinery and everything. I prepare special mouldings, etc., which will not be useful for any other kind of work; but I do it with the desire of getting that work and I include all the cost and consequences in that particular tender and after that tender is over and the work finished I take all the equipment without any value.

Q. You want to take such risks?

A. Yes.

Q. And the Government in your opinion should take such risks in the matter of spreading knowledge.

A. I do not think there is any risk.

Q. I do not think it is necessary to discuss that. I put it to you—do you think the industry is prospering on right lines?

A. On quite right lines.

Q. Do you think the proper finances will be forthcoming from the public?

A. Certainly. While in Germany I had myself thought of starting a studio here. I met one or two of our Indian people who were working for a film manufacturing company and they placed before me this proposition for consideration when I came over here but on account of various other things I could not consider it.

Q. How long has this been under your consideration?

A. I think I have been considering it for the last one year.

Q. And you have not yet begun?

A. Because I have various other engagements.

Q. I quite see that; but nothing tangible has taken shape.

A. Nothing.

Q. All that the Government need do—I suppose you believe in the quota system?

A. Yes.

Q. And all that the Government need do should be to give facilities and help in the shape of allowing shows on the public road, allowing their military and police to give access to places of importance which are in the charge of Government and such other facilities for production. You think that is enough?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you advocate a tariff—either the reduction or removal or enhancement of the duty along with these things?

A. Yes.

Q. So that with the quota system there should be

A. An enhanced tariff on imported films and a reduction on raw materials as has been suggested by the Indian Merchants Chamber.

Q. And you also believe in the licensing system for the purpose of securing that the Indian industry alone thrives?

A. With the object of securing the prosperity of the Indian industry.

Q. So that foreign interests may not get a foothold in this country.

A. Certainly and my reasons are obvious. The match industry has shown us a lesson and we have got to be very careful about an industry of this kind.

Q. How long has this Nasik concern been in existence?

Mr. B. S. Dabke: It was started in 1913. It is a private company.

Q. Now I suppose you don't mind answering any questions about the financial aspects of the concern, or if you want to keep that private you might send it to us; because we don't want to pry into your affairs.

A. Our managing partner will be giving evidence before you and he will be able to tell you all that you want to know. We have a branch office in Madras.

Q. So you think we had better leave it to him to answer these questions.

A. Yes. His name is Mr. Apte.

Q. Is he living in Madras.

A. No he is in Bombay for the present; but we have got a branch office there. Either he or our manager there will give you the information.

Q. So that we need not pursue the matter with you?

A. Yes.

Q. From your experience of the line you think there is a bright future for this industry?

A. Yes. As regards educational films, I might say that the present studios are quite efficient to produce any sort of films. We have produced films for the Great Indian Peninsula Railway for exhibition at Wembley. We got that order from the Great Indian Peninsula Railway, and if Government prepares its own scenario on medical questions, or on films relating to Hygiene or Health or Sanitation, we are prepared to place our studio at their disposal.

Q. You may be prepared to place your studio at the disposal of Government and several other people are prepared to do that?

A. But you can call for tenders or you can go by merit. For that purpose Government need not start its own studio and discourage private enterprise.

Q. I suppose you believe in Government doing pioneering work in certain things before leaving it to the trade generally?

A. But this is not an industry in which Government should do any pioneering work. It has already been in existence here for the last 7 or 8 years.

Q. I join issue with you there, because you have not produced a single educational film?

A. Do you mean to say that the Local Boards and Municipalities should ask us for films when primary education has not been expanded sufficiently in the country? When that is the condition of affairs, how is it possible for us to undertake such things?

Q. Would it not be advantageous if they had commercial experts? Suppose the Government ran its own studio for producing educational films, they would have experts in photography, in scenario writing and so forth of whom you in the trade can take advantage?

A. I say there are already experts in this line. Why should not the Government take advantage of those experts? We are satisfied with the experts that we now have in the country. The "Times of India" and other London papers have very highly spoken of our productions.

Mr. Neogy: Have you got the press notices?

A. Yes.

Chairman: Still you admit that your films have no foreign market? They cannot compete in technique with the foreign films?

A. May I ask you, Sir, what is the idea of technique?

Q. As a layman, I may say that I saw some four or five of the best Indian films the other day, but surely from the point of technique the Indian films were miles distant?

A. Do you mean to say that the Indian films should be westernised?

Q. I don't mean that.

A. Perhaps you have not seen the productions of the Hindustan Cinema Film Company of Nasik.

Q. I am sorry I have not seen them. I may have seen them in Madras, but yet, with due respect to the Indian film producers, in point of technique the Indian films do not compare favourably with western films?

A. In Indian films there is the Indian atmosphere, and you certainly cannot compare it with western standards in technique.

Q. I may be wrong in my opinion, but that is my view as a layman. of course I say that with due respect to all of you. So you don't think that there is need for any more technical experts to train people in the various branches of the industry?

A. I don't think experts are required. We have already got enough experts here.

Q. And yet several witnesses have advocated that we should send people abroad for receiving training on the commercial side?

A. If the Government is so enamoured of the industry, then they can send students abroad for training. But I do not believe in it. I know of a friend who was a Government of India scholar. He received his training in England in tanning. When he returned from England after completing his course there, he started his own concern here which was a huge failure, and all those people who return from foreign countries after completing their technical education are failures as practical men, and in this industry too they may become failures.

Q. Now, is there anything you wish to add?

A. I should like to say something about the western films which are exhibited in India. It is suggested that the moral tone of the western films is not quite satisfactory, and that by seeing them the people of this country form a low opinion about the morals of the western people. . . .

Q. I am not concerned with that for the moment. I should like to have your view whether these western films are likely to affect the Indians in their moral tone?

A. They are not likely to affect the people here, because all people in this country are now accustomed to see these films for the last 14 years, and nobody ever thought that these films should be stopped. In fact, the Censor Board came into existence only during the last 5 or 6 years, but these pictures have been exhibited for the last 12 or 13 years. I don't think by seeing those films the morals of our people will be affected.

Q. But there are young people growing every year into adolescence?

A. We are getting accustomed to that.

Q. I want to know whether really these films have an evil influence?

A. No, not at all. Some moralists might say that they have an evil influence, but in my opinion they do not affect the morals of our people.

Q. I want you to think as a father, as an elder brother, do you think that western films have any tendency to demoralise the people here?

A. I don't think so. Those things should not be cut off.

Q. You don't think there is an evil effect produced by these films?

A. I don't think so.

Q. You don't think that the prestige of the British people will be affected by our people seeing those films? Whether educated or uneducated?

A. There will be no effect produced even on the uneducated classes. The educated people of course know the manners and customs of the people of the west, while thousands of our uneducated people are employed by Europeans and they also know by actual experience and observations what the ways of the English people are. Therefore, these western films cannot possibly produce any evil effect on them.

Q. Do you think there is any deterioration in the moral tone of Indian life?

A. No.

Q. I don't mean due to the cinema.

A. Generally, comparing the present generation with the past there is certainly an advance, and this advance is beneficial. I don't think there is any deterioration in the moral tone of the Indian life.

Q. You don't think there is any moral deterioration either in the educated or uneducated people?

A. No.

Q. Now, look at it from the Indian point of view. Do these films produce any evil effect in the mind of the Indian public or of any portion thereof? Do they produce a feeling of contempt or disregard for western civilization?

A. I don't think so. If there is any such apprehension, it is entirely unfounded, and that is my experience.

Q. Is your experience confined to the Bombay presidency? I suppose you speak for the mofussil also?

A. I speak for the whole of the Bombay Presidency. When different civilizations with different traditions come in contact with each other, they collide and produce such evils but one should not magnify these evils.

Q. Do you think that the Indian appreciates those violent scenes of tight embracing and deep kissing?

• A. That is a matter of opinion.

Q. Do you think they appreciate it at their true value?

A. I may say that the cinema is a luxury and a pastime. So as soon as they return from a cinema show, they forget everything they had seen. Of course, for a short while, they enjoy and they forget everything.

Q. Suppose you go for 50 days in a year and see such films. Is the feeling or regard for the other community enhanced or is it lowered?

A. I say the cinema will not produce any effect on the Indian public so far as the western morals are concerned.

Mr. Green. Mr. Dahanukar, you represent the Maharashtra Chamber?

Mr. Dahanukar: Yes.

Q. When was it constituted?

A. Some months back. There was an institution which was started about 6 years ago, but then it did not regularly work. . . . .

Q. In paragraph 3 of your written statement you say something about censorship regarding foreign films. Can you specify any film that has offended or is it a general statement?

A. It is a general statement.

Q. You never had any complaint?

A. No.

Q. I should have thought that you might ask for the continuance of a rigorous censorship, which you already have?

A. We have had no complaints on that.

Q. I will now ask you one or two questions about the constitution of the Board. You want on the Board representatives of manufacturers, exhibitors and dealers to examine the cinema films? If you have such gentlemen on the Board of Censors, will they not be judges in their own case?

A. I think they will not individually be examining the films; there will be other Members of the Board also who will jointly examine these films.

Q. Do you want the whole Board to examine each film?

A. We have already suggested that there should be two Inspectors instead of one.

Q. That was Mr. Walchand's suggestion?

A. It is already stated in our written statement.

Q. You mean that when a film which is examined by an Inspector is challenged and goes before the Board, it should be examined by them. One of the gentlemen whose film may be under discussion—he may be a very good gentleman, may also be a member of the Board, and I want you to tell me whether he is to say whether that film is to be passed or not?

A. I don't think the man whose film is under discussion should be allowed to have a say in the matter.

Q. Then why have him on the Board?

A. There will be many other films also.

Q. The next film he sees may belong to one of his rivals?

A. But then when they are all sitting as judges, no such rivalry or partiality can be shown.

Q. But after all human nature is the same everywhere, is it not?

A. We can't help that.

Q. You say you are a contractor, but you are not allowed to sit and vote on any tender when it is being considered?

A. If I am a contractor of the municipality, I shall be allowed to sit and vote when a tender of any other body comes before us but not of the municipality of which I may be a member.

Q. What I am asking you is this. Suppose your firm tenders for a certain thing and you are a member of that municipality. Will you be allowed to vote on it?

A. No municipal member is allowed to tender for any works.

Q. You object to fees being charged for censoring films?

A. Yes.

Q. At present you are aware that the fees charged by the Board of Censors approximately cover the cost of working. If no fee is to be charged, how is the Board to be run?

A. I am not very particular about the fee point.

Q. Then you will be content to drop it?

A. It might be dropped.

*Col. Crawford:* In paragraph 3 of your statement you say that "My Committee pray for a vigorous censorship of films casting reflection directly or indirectly on Indian civilization". Is that on films shown in India or would you also apply that to films shown abroad?

A. For both.

Q. Therefore, you hold strongly to the view that there should be no misrepresentation allowed on the screen?

A. Yes.

Q. Would you carry out that principle as regards religious subjects? I mean as regards misrepresentation of religion on the screen?

A. As regards religion, the traditions of different religions are different, and misrepresentation should be dealt with on the merits of each case by the Board of Censors.

Q. But you are out against misrepresentation, where a film deals with a religion and puts into it practices which do not belong to that religion?

A. As I said, I would leave it to be dealt with by the Board of Censors. I don't think it is a sound thing to misrepresent on the film any community. No country should, in my opinion, be misrepresented, whether it is England, Germany or America or it may be any country.

Q. I quite agree that there is misrepresentation going on, and very possibly of India, abroad.

A. I may say one thing in this connection. One of my friends who is a partner of the Hindustan Cinema Film Co. had been to Germany and he

told me something about the misrepresentation. He said he saw a film in Berlin in which an Indian prince was shown as the guest of somebody there. After they had all finished their dinner, they were sitting in the lounge room, and after everybody had gone, the prince was shown as chatting with maids and servants, and the prince was also shown as stealing some valuable article. Such scenes are depicted on the screen abroad. I came across another film in London in one of the theatres where it was shown that a European gentleman came across a Hindu or Indian woman and he offered some inducements to her and she went over to him very easily. These sort of scenes certainly do produce a wrong impression in the west about Indians.

*Q.* I am equally with you in denouncing such sort of films, and I don't want to ask you any more questions on that.

*A.* So my suggestion is that the Board of Censors in foreign countries throughout the British Empire should prohibit such scenes, and outside the British Empire I would suggest that our British Consuls should be instructed to look after it. I would also suggest the desirability of putting Indian members on the Board of Censors in all countries abroad.

*Q.* I notice that you are a very strong opponent of Imperial Preference?

*A.* I am not speaking from the political point of view.

*Q.* Supposing we were to discover that we could definitely help the Indian cinema industry by Imperial preference, still you would be against it, and that the industry must therefore give way to politics for the time being?

*A.* I am not concerned with politics for the moment at all, but taking into consideration the interests of the industry itself, I do not think that we need any reciprocity or Imperial preference at all.

*Q.* As it is, to-day it may not be necessary, but after examination if we were to change our mind and feel that the industry wants something of that kind, would you be against Preference?

*A.* In that case I would leave the question to the Legislature. I can't give my personal opinion on that point.

*(Mr. B. S. Dabke's evidence.)*

*Q.* With regard to educational films, you assured us that you thought that it was possible for Government to call for tenders from the present producing companies? Are you working at full speed in production to-day?

*Mr. B. S. Dabke:* We produce films according to demand.

*Q.* And the demand is increasing to-day.

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* All the evidence that we have so far received shows that the demand is increasing?

*A.* Not tremendously.

*Q.* Can you meet all the demand?

*A.* We are not in a position to meet all the demand.

*Q.* Does the production of films of entertainment value bring you a good profit? I do not want to go into your figures?

*A.* As far as our company is concerned, it gives a decent dividend.

*Q.* We heard to-day that a film costing say about Rs. 33,000 gave a return of a lakh of rupees in a year. Now, if you were doing work of that nature for Government, what price would you charge Government?

*A.* We might expect even two lakhs. Who will pay all that?

*Q.* Is it worth your while to do that sort of work, i.e., if the production of a film for Government takes the same length of time as the production of a film of entertainment value costing Rs. 33,000 and brings you a return of a lakh of rupees in a year?



A. We shall not undertake this business as our principal business; that will be our side business.

Q. I suppose your studio is already full up?

A. Yes, we will take up that business as a side line, and our charges will also be the same as we would charge for side business.

Q. I see that you have no room to-day even for a side business. Assuming that you throw all your resources into this business for producing films of entertainment value, how can you contract to make a picture for Government and charge them the same prices?

A. Government pictures will not occupy the same time as our pictures.

Q. If you are fully occupied already, you cannot give even five minutes for other work?

A. I never said that our studios are so fully occupied. I said that we cannot meet all the demand.

Q. You make a recommendation that Government should call for tenders for their work, whereas I find that all studios are full up with very much more remunerative work. Then they could only tender for Government work at very high prices, far higher prices than it would cost Government themselves to produce?

A. Government should call for tenders and then decide upon the cheapest tender, of course consistent with the good standard of work. They should decide by competitive prices.

Q. What would be the nature of these competitive prices?

A. That is to say, if one is fully occupied, he will not even care to submit his tender. If I have a tremendous demand and if my studio is fully occupied, I would not even care to send in my tender. I can't say about other people; here I am speaking for myself. If we are fully occupied we would not care to send in our tender.

Q. How can you take a picture on a rainy day?

A. But we have not got rains all the year round.

Q. I am not quite clear. If we are to make a proposal to Government that they should get all their educational films by tenders to producing companies, I want to be quite certain that the producing companies have the time to undertake such work?

A. There are some producing companies which have got the time to do it.

Q. And yet we hear that the demand for the Indian pictures is greater than the supply to-day. Every Indian producer told me that the demand exceeds the supply, and that his studio is working nearly 16 annas. I therefore don't see how your scheme of Government calling for tenders would be effective unless you charge Government full prices which you would get for an entertainment picture. That is not a paying proposition from your point of view?

A. As I said, the company which has its hands full will certainly not send in any tenders, but the other companies who have not so much work on hand will submit their tenders.

Q. Are there any such companies which are not fully occupied?

A. Yes, there are.

Q. In spite of the demand for Indian-made pictures?

A. Yes. What I say is that there are companies in India which can find sufficient time to produce educational and other films for Government and Railways.

Q. At what price?

A. At competitive prices. It will not be on the scale of the prices which we charge for the production of entertainment films.

**Q.** Let us take the case of your company. If it costs you say about Rs. 33,000 to make an entertainment film, how much would you charge Government for a similar film of educational value? Will it be by footage?

**A.** Footage will not alone be the criterion. That will depend upon the individual case.

**Q.** If you spend about Rs. 30,000 on an entertainment film you get back a lakh in a year. What charge do you think you would make to Government on such a film?

**A.** We have got other camera men and we shall be developing the other side of our business also.

**Mr. Coatsman:** I understand that your entertainment films cost you Rs. 33,000 and give you a return of a lakh in a year's time?

**A.** I don't say that Rs. 33,000 is the expense and a lakh of rupees is the profit. I have told the Chairman that we shall be giving comprehensive evidence regarding the financial aspect in Madras, therefore, the Committee must not take it as an absolutely correct statement.

**Chairman:** That must be a stray case, is it not?

**A.** Yes.

**Colonel Crawford:** My idea is that the production of an entertainment film brings in a far better return than a film for Government?

**A.** If that were the case, do you mean to say that the millionaires and multi-millionaires of Bombay would not have come forward with all their capital to invest in this industry? They would certainly have started any number of studios. What you said referred to a stray case. You can not base your arguments on the strength of that stray case and ask me questions regarding educational films.

**Q.** Do you think it would be worth your while to tender for a contract as against the production of an entertainment film?

**A.** If Government creates a demand, it will be all right.

**Chairman:** I don't think it is necessary to pursue that point any further.

**Colonel Crawford:** As a producer of entertainment films you have told us that the western films have no demoralising standard in India?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Do you agree that a large proportion of western films make a sex appeal?

**A.** They are showing their own social customs.

**Q.** You believe that these are the social customs of the west?

**A.** I have not visited personally Germany and America and England but such as these are shown in the films.

**Q.** And you personally believe them to be more or less true to life?

**A.** Surely they are not fantastic pictures.

**Q.** Well now, in these films there is a great deal of sex appeal.

**A.** In this connection I might say that these pictures are not produced only for the Indian market. If they were not true to life they would not have been passed in America.

**Q.** I want to talk to you perfectly frankly. The American producer does produce these sex films because it pays him to produce them. He only gets a small percentage here but he does produce them for the American market and they have a sex appeal because that type of film perhaps makes money. Well now, the introduction of these films into India is making a sex appeal to Indian audiences. And asking you as a commercial man, does it pay you to produce a film in India having materially the same features as these western films?

**A.** Our civilisation is quite different and our films produced on these lines would not pay.

**Q.** You don't think a sex appeal in your pictures is a paying proposition?

A. No, we produce pictures which are appealing to the Indians and which are true to the life of the Indians. And the American also is a business man, and must be producing films true to life.

Q. I am not worrying about the American now. You definitely say that, so far as India is concerned, the representation in your Indian pictures of anything in the nature of sex appeal is not a paying proposition.

A. As far as the films which I have seen in India go, Indian films have not so much sex appeal. Because our manners and customs and traditions are such that these things would not come in. No lady would be willing to have an open kissing, whereas it is the custom in western countries.

Q. I quite see your point. If however you were to allow these western films to come in, do you think there would be a taste for such films?

A. For 15 years we are seeing these films and there is no taste. Otherwise if that had been the case, and a taste had been created, no Indian films would have been popular because the audience would have selected those films which had a sex appeal and would not have cared for Indian films.

Mr. Neogy: You said you had occasion to manufacture a film for the G. I. P. Railway. Did you do it on a contract basis?

A. No, they asked us if we would prepare the film and how much we would charge.

Q. Did you make as much money out of that as you did on the other films?

A. No, because they left it to us as business men and we said we would take a reasonable profit.

Q. And whatever you charged was considered quite reasonable?

A. Not only that but the G. I. P. Railway recommended us to the N. W. R. and other railways also but unfortunately we were too busy and we could not undertake their business.

Q. So if you were asked to manufacture films you would not expect a larger return than that?

Chairman: He would not make it, he said.

Mr. Neogy: Supposing you were assured of some government business, would it be very difficult for you to expand your studio to undertake it? You have got the necessary equipment and the necessary men.

A. Yes, for the present needs of the Government.

Q. And your overhead charges won't be increased?

A. On the other hand, they will be lower, it will be a side business for us.

Mr. Dahanukar: And there will also be other new companies to take up such business.

Mr. Neogy: So it will be a sort of impetus to the Indian business.

Mr. Dabke: Yes.

Q. Now, there is some sort of uncertainty in manufacturing films of your own. For instance, the film may not pass the censor. In that case, you may lose all the money. Secondly the film may not be so popular—there is a risk of loss. So when you have the Government contract, you wouldn't have to take into account all these factors of uncertainty and that would influence you in fixing your demand.

A. Yes.

Q. Now, as to the question of how far Indian film production has kept pace with the demand, I wonder if you can let me have an idea as to the rate of progress of the manufacture of Indian films during the last few years. By what percentage has the manufacture of Indian films increased during the last few years as compared with the increase in the import of foreign films?

A. I have got a statement here. I got this from the Director of Industries, Dr. Meek, and he says that the total import into India from all countries has risen by 138 per cent.

Q. During what period?

A. During a period of five years. From 1922-23 to 1926-27. In 1922-23 73 lakhs of footage was imported and last year the figure rose to one crore and 74 lakhs. So if it continues at this rate there is every likelihood that the Indian film industry will be killed.

Q. But what about the Indian films? What has been the rate of progress correspondingly?

A. It is not so great.

Q. What is it?

A. During the last five years it is comparatively low. The Indian producing companies produce only 12 films in a year. Some produce 10, some 4 or 5.

Q. Then you say the progress in the manufacture of Indian films has not kept pace with the progress in the import of foreign films.

A. Certainly. I have just calculated that supposing there are ten film companies, each producing on an average, five films a year, that work out at 7,000 feet for each film, to 35,000 feet; so that each company will be importing into India raw films to the extent of 35,000 feet or more. 35,000 would be the actual finished film produced by one company. At this rate, 10 companies will be requiring 3 lakhs 50 thousand positive for one copy of each film produced. Whereas the imported films coming into India are 1 crore and 74 lakhs. It is more than 49 times.

Chairman: Have you got the figures for Indian production?

A. No, no record is kept.

Colonel Crawford: Now will you look at the figures for 1921. The number of films examined was 2913. You will see that there was a tremendous drop in 1922. This was due to depression in trade. If you go back to 1921 and work from those figures you will see that there has been no increase.

A. But my figures are supplied by the Director of Statistics and they show that the import into India has risen by 138 per cent.

Q. From 1922, but they have actually dropped from 1921. Did you ask for the figures for 1921?

A. He says there is no record in his office for that year.

Mr. Green: I think it is a fact that until 1922 imported films were not specified in the customs returns.

Chairman: What is your point on these figures? That the Indian production is not increasing as rapidly as the imported films taking the figures for the last five or six years?

A. Yes. And I would like to point out that as there is a 243 per cent. increase in imports from England alone, there is no reason why we should go in for imperial preference. It would be a partnership between a giant and a pigmy.

Mr. Neogy: Do you generally agree with the suggestions made by your people and Mr. Walehand with regard to the assistance which the Government should give to this industry or have you any other suggestions to make?

A. I have other suggestions. We do not want that the Government should sacrifice anything or that Government should help directly. But this is indirect help, if they increase the import duty with the recommendation of the committee. By how much per cent. it should be increased is for them to say. Then I would say it will be a help to the industry as well as a help to the Finance Member.

Q. Then you think perhaps, in view of the large increase in the import of foreign films, such an increase in the duty wouldn't affect the film production or affect the supply?

A. No, it won't.

Q. What do you think of the way the censorship works at present, from the point of view of the producer?

A. The board of censors came into existence according to the Government of India Cinema Act. Well, there is no uniformity in the procedure. Here is a case. One of our films, "Sulochana" was produced in 1921 and passed without endorsement or traingle. In it Sulochana after the death of her husband ascends the funeral pyre and becomes a suttee. That scene was passed. In 1924 the story was continued in Ramayan series in which we show Ravan in the court; he is told that Indrajit is dead and Sulochana ascends the funeral pyre and he thinks for a while what he should do. There is a vision in which he (Ravan) sees Sulochana ascending the funeral pyre. That same suttee scene is there. We did not duplicate the scene. We took it bodily out of the previous film and it is the same in every detail. But when it was shown in 1924 in "Ram Ravan Youddha" the censors board raised objection. They said they would not allow that suttee scene, which was already passed.

Q. Were you permitted to exhibit the earlier picture?

A. Yes, it was run everywhere. It was shown again quite recently, in Bombay.

Q. Was it the same censor?

A. The same board of censors. I would invite the attention of the committee to the fact that these facts of Hindu mythology are known even to the rustic who is not educated or to anyone carrying on his trade in up-country districts. Yet a board of censors says these things should not be allowed.

Mr. Green: Did you draw this extraordinary inconsistency to the notice of the board?

A. We didn't. We had to submit to the decision of the board. We are afraid of annoying them. We have to deal with them so much.

Q. Have you any other instance to give?

A. Yes, blood is not allowed. For instance we showed "Arjun" killing Jaidrath and his head falls into the hands of his father and instead of offering water to the Sun-god the blood of the head is offered. So the Sun-god curses him and says: Both of you will die. And we had painted that scene red. The censor insisted on our omitting the scene where the water turns red with blood. There is another thing. These blood scenes are allowed in other films, whereas they are not allowed in Indian films.

Chairman: It is want of understanding. I can quite conceive persons who are not acquainted making mistakes like that.

What is your remedy: You want more members of the board to examine the films?

A. The producers should be there.

You want them to be on the board or called and asked to explain in case of doubt?

A. But they will say: delete those films.

Q. But you will tell them: this is the sense of the story; you cannot cut it out.

Mr. Green: We always send Indian members to see these films.

Chairman: You had better send in a written statement if you have anything more to say on that point.

Mr. Coatman: Would you mind telling me if any members of your chamber are financially interested in the industry?

Mr. Dahanukar: Yes. They have got money in it.

Q. Are there any people producing films within your committee's area? Have any members of your chamber invested money in the industry apart from the actual producer?

A. There are. But I cannot say definitely how many.

Q. You mentioned to our Chairman that you were quite satisfied with the photography?

A. Yes.

Q. Speaking as a technical man, do you believe that this is up to the standard of the American photography?

A. Yes.

Q. Where was your photographer trained?

A. The present photographer was trained in India. But Mr. Phalke, who was the pioneer, was trained in the beginning in Germany.

Q. They are all his disciples?

A. Yes.

Q. Then you think there is no longer any need for foreign experts?

A. In this matter I will say that foreigners are accustomed to arc-lamp photography. In India where there is plenty of sunshine they will be at a disadvantage, in photography without an arc-lamp.

Q. But in other branches?

A. They will not understand our settings and architecture and they will not understand our mythology and our social customs.

**Oral Evidence of Mr. N. D. GANDHI and Mr. P. S. TALYARKHAN,  
of the Orient Pictures Corporation, on Wednesday, the 16th  
November 1927.**

*Chairman:* I take it, Mr. Talyarkhan and Mr. Gandhi, both of you are interested in the cinema industry?

A. Yes.

Q. Especially on the production side?

A. Yes.

Q. Both of you have travelled in the west?

*Mr. Talyarkhan:* Mr. Gandhi has travelled in the west specially to study the cinema industry.

Q. Have you been to America also?

*Mr. Gandhi:* Yes, and also in Germany and in Vienna to study the working of the studios there.

Q. Did you study the art in America?

A. No, we Indians have practically no chance in America. The only way is to acquire some idea of the technique from Germany, France or Italy, and then go to America, where on certain week days one is allowed to see the working of the studios on nominal payment.

Q. Perfection?

A. Well, it could not be perfection unless you have actually worked in the studio.

Q. Supposing you were to train Indians in the technique of the cinema industry, which is the best place to send them to?

A. Well, if they are government students, I would certainly say America.

Q. But you say it is difficult for Indians.

A. Yes, for Indians going in a private capacity.

Q. If an ordinary student goes and seeks admission, it would be difficult?

A. In America it would be so. Not so in Germany. The greatest difficulty in Germany is the language. If you can speak German, or French, you can get the full benefit of the instruction.

Q. There is that difficulty. And what about England just now?

A. Well, England just now would not be very unsatisfactory.

*Q.* I am thinking of students. Supposing Government were to send students for training and for technical knowledge, would it be better to send them to England?

*A.* Why not, they would be better treated in England, and because of the language it would be more easy to acquire the art.

*Q.* We had a statement from one of the gentlemen who preceded you that they demanded £3,000 for admission.

*A.* It may be or it may not be so. Which year was that?

*Q.* I do not know the year, but he made us understand that it was difficult to get admission in England where it was easy to get admission in Germany.

*A.* It may be so, but there are other difficulties . . . . .

*Q.* I do not want their difficulties. My question is, do you think that they will get facilities in England as much as in any other country like Germany?

*A.* I do not know the present conditions, but even if there are facilities, I would advise that the student should go to America for six months to get the finishing touch.

*Q.* You have now embarked on this industry, I think both of you have produced the film, "Sacrifice"?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* And you intend to persevere in the production of such films?

*A.* We hope so.

*Q.* Do you think the chances of developing the industry on right lines are very good?

*A.* Tremendous.

*Q.* The prospects are tremendous?

*Mr. Tatyarkhan:* Yes.

*Q.* Do you think that left to private effort the development will take place all right, I mean, without any assistance or aid, direct or indirect, from Government?

*A.* It all depends on the kind of assistance we may receive.

*Q.* Do you want any assistance?

*A.* Financial assistance would be the best. The market is very much limited here in India. We have got about 340 cinemas only, and they are not all showing Indian pictures. I am talking of Indian productions only, and unless some scope is given to us, to show our films in all these theatres and a wider market created for them it would not be worth our while to produce costly pictures.

*Q.* If every theatre could be made to run a certain proportion of Indian pictures, that would be an encouragement?

*Mr. Gandhi:* That would be the first step towards an international market.

*Q.* But have you worked out that point, how many of the 340 or 350 cinemas in the country show Indian pictures and how many of them show foreign pictures?

*Q.* Taking the whole of India—I am not talking only of the Bombay city—but taking the whole of India together, what proportion does the Indian production play in the total exhibition?

*Mr. Tatyarkhan:* I am told that 78 picture houses show Indian pictures either wholly or in part.

*Mr. Gandhi:* My figure comes to 27 per cent.

*Q.* 27 per cent. of the footage?

*A.* Of the theatres.

*Q.* 27 per cent. of the theatres show Indian pictures either solely or along with western films?

A. Yes.

Q. Can you give us the footage of Indian produced films shown in the theatres as compared with the foreign films?

A. I have no idea of the foreign footage.

Mr. Green: I can give it to you. Last year the imports of foreign films were 17½ million feet.

Mr. Gandhi: I would roughly put it this way 10 studios producing 12 pictures a year. This I would not say is the highest but it is a fair average, because I know that some have produced about 18 pictures a year, whereas some have produced less at the same time. Roughly, then, it comes to 120 films, let us take it at 100 films a year. I would put the average footage at 8,000 feet because the Indian films are long, while the foreign films are 6,000 or 5,000 feet and they show comedies and Pathe Gazette, as well.

Q. Then you put the average footage at 8 lakhs?

A. Yes.

Q. Compare that with 175 lakhs.

Mr. Green: The footage of the imported films includes every copy of the film. How many copies are produced of the Indian films?

A. It all depends.

Q. We have been told that they take about 4 or 5 copies.

A. The average number of copies of an Indian production would not exceed 3 or 4.

Q. Shall we take it at 4?

A. Yes.

Chairman: Multiplying 8 lakhs by 4 your proportion is 32 lakhs to 175 lakhs, that is, about a sixth. I thought it was more, Bombay gave me that impression.

Mr. Talyarkhan: I do not think the average can be put at more than 4.

Chairman: It is only a rough guide. We must also take into account the rate of progress of import and the rate of progress of production.

A. Yes.

Q. Can you help us in that? If you have not worked it out, we will work it out; if you get it later, you can send it on to us.

Mr. Gandhi: Yes. I will make a note of it.

Q. You believe in the quota system in order to advance the production of Indian films?

A. Yes.

Q. What else do you want?

Mr. Talyarkhan: With regard to the quota system, we believe whatever the quota may be 7 or 7½ or 10 per cent. whatever that may be, it should be given entirely to the Indian production in India. Our industry is a very young industry and it is in its incipient stages and requires a certain amount of protection. Therefore I would suggest that if there is any percentage of quota, the whole percentage should be allotted to Indian production.

Q. And should not be dissipated among the various partners of the Empire?

A. No, it should not be. The other parts of the Empire have got facilities and finance for production far better than India and so they can compete with the American pictures in point of technique, art and the finish of the film in the remaining 92½ per cent. market here.

Q. I suppose you agree that the technique of the Indian products, as it is at present, is very defective?

A. Very poor.

Q. We do not want to shut our eyes to our own defects when we are on the path of improvement?



*Mr. Gandhi:* Certainly not. Without artificial lights or combination of artificial lights it is not possible<sup>1</sup> to produce good results. Not only lights and camera work are essential, but also the laboratory. Our laboratory is absolutely in the primitive stage. Nobody knows how to control the density. Here we have no artificial lights and we have to depend upon the sun and the reflectors, and anybody who knows something about Indian light knows that every moment, every second the light varies, and it is practically impossible to control the density. . . .

*Mr. Green:* It was represented by a gentleman who I understand knows a great deal about these lights, that the light is very bad from about 11-45 in the morning till about 2 or later in the afternoon . . . .

A. Yes. It is impossible to shoot a picture in top light.

*Chairman:* When they say that it is all right and progressing on the right lines, you would say it is a sense of false pride in your own condition?

A. Yes.

Q. So that the technique of the industry requires to be greatly attended to?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think that the persons in charge of the industry now are likely to improve their technique if left to themselves?

A. It all depends on the capacity and ability of the people engaged in the line.

*Mr. Talparchan:* If left to themselves, the improvement would be so slow that it would not be worth speaking about. The science outside is progressing rapidly, at giant strides, and here we are fumbling at the first stage. We might be able to produce films better than we are producing at present, but we will not be able to compete with the technique or the finish that we see in the foreign films.

Q. Even the Indian consumer requires a good article?

*Mr. Gandhi:* Yes.

Q. He goes to these shows because he does not get better ones.

A. He is always on the look out for new things, he understands something about photography. I am sure that within a few years if we do not improve our technique, our position will be a very difficult one.

*Mr. Green:* Will you be driven out of the market by foreign pictures?

A. Foreign pictures of the type of the 'Thief of Baghdad'.

*Chairman:* So that you say there is an imminent necessity to look after the technique as well?

A. Yes.

Q. From that point of view, I may lead on to my other point on which I should like to have your considered views. There are certain aspects of the cinema industry in which the Government as promoters of public utility are interested, and with that particular aspect in view, would you approve of the idea of Government running its own studio for its own purpose where they will have the assistance of technical experts and a studio well equipped which may be availed of by the trade?

A. I would suggest that a studio on a small scale with a complete laboratory, say, 1,000 per day and artificial lights worth about 50,000, a good camera and a good printing machine, a good camera man, a good director, a good electrician should be brought over whether English, French or German, but I would say each should be a real expert. Not the sort of expert that we sometimes get; as soon as he comes to India he becomes an expert. We want a man who is really an expert in England and who sacrifices something in his salary to come out here. Let him produce educational films.

Q. I see the value of the cinema, and I do not think you need dilate on it. We know the value of cinema as an educator. The point which I

have in mind is, you therefore approve that the Government should embark upon establishing a small studio and not on a very big scale?

A. Not on a very big scale, but allow at the same time such facilities to those who are in the present studios, to go and see the thing and learn it. Government should make it compulsory on every cinema to show these educational films, I do not say 2,000 or 3,000 feet, but one of 1,000 feet. For example a film on cleanliness which is such an important subject for the Indians might be shown; a film on hygienic principles of life, one on clothing, and all the rest of it. Take, again, for example, the theory of child birth. A thousand and one like subjects could be shown.

Q. What else have you got to say? What other help do you recommend? You said first of all, quota, then these facilities in the shape of a studio, and what else?

A. We want to have access to places of interest, under official supervision.

Q. You mean that an official should be there to co-ordinate the work?

A. Yes.

Q. That is a matter of detail. What about the tariffs?

Mr. Talparchan: We want some kind of protection in the shape either of quota or tariff. Preferable, of course, is the allotment of a full quota. If that is not to be had then enhanced tariff would be some support to the Indian industry.

Q. Figures have to be carefully examined. If the rate of progress of imports is very much, you say you advocate an enhancement of the duty on imported films?

A. Yes, if full quota is not granted.

Q. To be divided on the number of copies, that was the suggestion. Then what about the raw articles that are required?

A. Raw articles and machinery should be allowed to pass without any duty. It will help the industry considerably, particularly at this stage.

Mr. Gandhi: Otherwise we have to stint considerably in the use of negatives and positives.

Q. Your point is that the risk of wastage is very large?

A. A successful picture would need lot of wastage that way.

Q. With reference to that point, we are rather impressed with the thing which we saw in every producing place we went to. The general impression is it is now a paying concern, the producing industry is a paying concern to the producer. That being so, how do you justify reduction or enhancement? As it is a paying proposition?

A. I have my own doubts. If it is a well produced film it will pay. Take, for instance, "Sacrifice". That is the first time it has attracted the upper and educated classes of people to see that film.

Mr. Neogy: They never cared to go to the Indian cinemas?

A. Yes. Since all our present films are an imitation of western films.

Chairman: But from the commercial point of view the producer might say the educated classes are an infinitesimal minority and his clientele comes from the masses.

A. We are prepared to prove from our own figures that the figures of the first week were as good as any other picture that appeals the masses.

Q. Then the educated classes are a negligible factor in counting the commercial chances?

A. Not exactly so.

Colonel Crawford: Are you saying that the educated classes are a negligible factor from the commercial point of view?

A. They are not. I beg your pardon. From our figures we can prove that the educated classes as well as the masses supported our picture.

*Chairman:* I do not deny that. What I mean is, that the man may say he has no incentive to draw the educated classes because the audience they can give you is so small compared with the audience that the multitude can give?

A. It is like this. When I say educated classes, I mean classes which are literate and all that, one man in one rupee means about five men in 3 annas there.

Q. For one man in one rupee seat you may have 50 men in the 3 or 4 annas seats?

A. I quite agree that it should not cater for the literate classes only or exclusively for the educated classes.

Q. The object should be to improve the technique and moral tone?

A. Exactly so. We must create a taste for the appreciation for better productions.

Q. If you neglect the masses you are done for?

A. No one can afford to do that.

*Mr. Neogy:* Do pictures which draw the educated classes have a better chance with the other provinces, provinces in which the picture may not be produced, than pictures which may give some box office return but have to depend upon the masses, that is to say, your picture would have a far greater chance then in the rest of India than perhaps a less costly picture which may be a greater success from the box office point of view in Bombay?

A. Yes. Mr. Kooka of the Globe Theatre in Calcutta has never booked an Indian picture and ours is the first picture that has been booked in Calcutta to be shown to the Europeans and the higher educated classes of Indians.

*Chairman:* My point is, as the producing trade now exists it is a paying proposition?

A. It is not exactly paying. It would be a paying proposition if properly organised. It is not, I can assure you.

*Mr. Taljarkhan:* The proposition will really be very paying in the long run, but as it is done now we have our own doubts.

Q. One gentleman said these people make profits hand over fist but instead of putting it into the industry they spend it on luxuries.

A. That may be one reason. At the same time that gentleman had only one point in mind, the box office returns in Bombay, Calcutta and Madras but not the net returns. For example a picture running in an English theatre, the average income on it is from Rs. 3,000 to Rs. 4,000. If the picture is good it might be Rs. 5,000, while if it is extraordinary it might run to even Rs. 10,000; but I am taking as an average Rs. 4,000. Because an Indian theatre's takings in the first week, are Rs. 7,000, they think it is a paying proposition but it is not so. While an European picture has a chance of going to 250 or 350 different theatres where he gets a minimum rent, our picture would go to very few stations at Rs. 40 or Rs. 50 a day. So it is an exaggerated notion, which could only have come from a man who is showing only European films.

Q. Anyway it is a matter worth investigation.

A. We leave that to the Committee.

Q. Now I want to ask another question. Do you think Indian pictures as a commercial proposition can print more than 4 copies on an average?

A. I know cases in which 6, 7 and 8 copies have been made.

Q. But I mean on an average?

A. I would put it at 3 copies.

Q. You do not think it would be a paying proposition to produce more than 3 copies?

A. Provided it appeals to the box offices . . . . .

**Q.** You see my object in putting that question was in order to come to the next point—How does the cost of the foreign picture compare with the cost of the Indian picture to an exhibitor. It has been represented to us that foreign pictures can be had cheap by an exhibitor whereas an Indian picture costs Rs. 20,000, Rs. 30,000 or Rs. 50,000 to produce and you cannot produce more than 3 copies. Therefore the overhead charges, etc., have to be divided between 3 copies, whereas the foreign manufacturer produces 400 or 500 copies in one country so that the cost at which he is able to sell in India is very small compared with the cost of Indian pictures; and therefore the Indian industry requires protection on that ground.

**A.** Quite, absolutely. The production over there may be very costly but they are not producing for India. India is an extra gift to them. It travels all over the world, then comes here. So it pays them to sell at any price. We cannot possibly do that, because our market is merely confined to this country.

**Q.** So the foreign cost of the foreign picture is so small compared with the foreign cost of the Indian picture that on that ground the Indian picture should be protected?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** There is one other point I wish to know from you. Do you think that any pictures are produced in America or elsewhere merely for consumption in India?

**A.** Impossible, it won't pay them.

**Q.** Or for the Orient generally.

**A.** Not even for the Orient, because Japan refuses to have anything to do with America.

**Q.** China is a large consumer. But what I want to know is do they produce only for consumption in the Orient.

**A.** I do not believe it. When Americans have 18,000 theatres of their own to cater for, why should they waste their money on a few theatres outside America.

**Q.** Is there anything else in your opinion that should be done to encourage the Indian industry?

**A.** We certainly object to the entertainment tax. That is on the general ground that the cheaper the production the better it is distributed.

**Mr. Neogy:** On this point may I know whether you would advocate the entire abolition of the entertainment tax or its remission in the case of those theatres which show Indian films, whether you want the abolition to apply to all cases or to benefit only the Indian industry?

**A.** Not that. I would not make it so complicated. I think it should be abolished altogether.

**Q.** In some other countries the idea has been put forward that the entertainment tax should be remitted for the benefit of the home production. I do not know whether it would be a very complicated process administratively. You are interested in the Indian industry?

**A.** Yes, and if we get sufficient encouragement by the allotment of 'full quota', failing which enhancement of the tariff and all the other facilities we want and need and abolition of this entertainment tax we will get enough and we need not bother about foreign films at all.

**Chairman:** One other point I wish to trouble you about because some people have advocated the necessity of some Government aid in the way of loans. The bulk of the opinion given before us however, both by merchants and producers, is that they do not stand in need of it, the industry does not stand in need of any pecuniary assistance from Government by way of loans. Although the first few witnesses favoured it, later on we found they said it was not needed.

**A.** As far as I have read the evidence of witnesses the idea behind their mind is that if Government advances a loan it would mean Government

control. That is the fear; but I do not believe that they do not want financial help. I do not believe that, because I know for certain that some of them who have given evidence here do need financial help and they are having it from outside. It is a financial necessity.

Q. What about a co-operative society among yourselves, among producers?

A. We have got an association.

Q. I mean a co-operative society for financing.

A. It is not a bad idea but it all depends on the terms.

Q. Anyway it is a matter that may be considered. You think some arrangement financially is advisable if the industry is to prosper from time to time.

A. Yes but before that, as I say, the market should be expanded. It cannot go on like this in a moribund state.

Mr. Coatsman: I take it your producing concern is financed by yourselves? There is no public money in it?

A. In fact this is our first venture in which we had to take some assistance from friends.

Q. In present conditions do you think it would be very difficult to get money from the general public?

A. I should say so.

Q. Would you welcome loans from the Director of Industries, provided there was no Government control, provided you gave ordinary commercial security?

A. Quite so. I would. It all depends on the terms we get the money on, but subject to all that, why not? If we are going to have the money from anybody else, why not the Director of Industries?

Q. You think Government ought to lend money out on easy terms through the Director provided there is no Government control.

A. Certainly yes.

Q. Now if we were able to get more capital into your concern, I take it you will use it in developing your technical facilities, your laboratory and so on?

A. That is right.

Q. In the matter of developing your films you would like to have things like automatic developing facilities?

A. Yes, a scientifically laid out laboratory and all that.

Q. Would that be very expensive?

A. It would pay us even at this stage; it would pay us to have that; it would not be a burden.

Q. What is the cost of an automatic developing apparatus.

A. From Rs. 30,000 to Rs. 35,000, for our laboratory only.

Q. Would it be possible for a number of producing concerns to combine for these facilities.

A. Then the cost I mention will be greatly exceeded. I am only talking of just one.

Q. The last question I will ask you is can you think of any special devices for multiplying your audiences, so to speak. Have you ever considered the possibility of having shows for *purdah* ladies?

A. I don't think so. We will have to create that market. We are not sure of it. We have no experience behind us to say that. But then the subject would be so as to bring the *purdah* lady out. Generally as Indian productions are at present I do not think they would be tempting enough for *purdah* ladies to go and see them. We were approached by certain Persian ladies when we were showing "Sacrifice," to arrange for such a show.

*Mr. Neogy*: What amount of capital do you think would be sufficient for the purpose of starting this sort of studio or producing concern that you have in mind that would satisfy you?

A. Our reckoning is that for the studio and laboratory only, for the two combined we would be satisfied with about 3½ or 4 lakhs.

*Colonel Crawford*: Have you in regard to your picture "Sacrifice" found any difficulty in showing that picture in theatres generally catering to educated audiences?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you any suggestion to make. Do you think the quota system will get over that?

A. Yes.

Q. You want a foreign market?

A. Yes. We need a foreign market.

Q. Are you in favour of Imperial preference?

A. That is to say which way?

Q. The general political opinion in India is that we do not want Imperial preference. Do you think that is liable if put too strongly to damage your foreign market?

A. In fact it would widen our market.

Q. But I mean, would any opposition to Imperial preference damage your market?

A. It would.

Q. You suggest therefore that in refraining from Imperial preference we should be tactful in the way we put it.

A. That is the idea behind it.

Q. Are you aware that arc lamps are used in America with daylight pictures.

*Mr. Gandhi*: A combination of the two.

Q. That is to economise the expense of lighting, but if you can afford to use only arc lamps?

A. We are going to import these things.

Q. Is the sex appeal in a picture a definitely paying proposition commercially in India?

*Mr. Talparchan*: It all depends where it is shown. For instance if it is shown among the lower class in cheap theatres, I believe it would attract people.

Q. You believe it does attract to-day, definitely does attract Indian audiences?

A. Not all of them. But trade has got to pander to the taste of our audience.

Q. I am inclined to think that the sex appeal being human draws us all deliberately to some extent. Does it do so in India too?

*Mr. Gandhi*: Yes.

Q. Many witnesses have said that the present day Western film is not doing any harm. What I want to know is, is the present day Western film making a definite appeal to Indians?

A. But not to such an extent as was said by Major Ellis Jones. He exaggerated it.

Q. But it does have an appeal and it is a commercial proposition. A really good kiss on the stage is a draw?

A. You cannot get away from that.

*Mr. Green*: Do you hope to show your film "Sacrifice" outside India?

*Mr. Talparchan*: You mean Europe? We are negotiating for it.

**Q.** But could you say in what country you hope to show it first with any prospect of success?

**A.** England, Germany, France.

**Q.** Have you any hope of getting it put on the American market?

**A.** I do think so.

**Mr. Gandhi:** May I make a few suggestions, regarding railway concessions which have been stopped, free criticism in the press, etc.

**Chairman:** I would ask you to put in a statement on all that.

**Mr. Tatyarkhan:** There was one thing I heard yesterday. One of the witnesses unnecessarily maligned the Association we all belong to.

**Chairman:** I stopped it and I have not allowed it to go on the proceedings.

### **Oral Evidence of Mr. GEORGE MOOSER, Representative of the Metro-Goldwyn Film Corporation of America, on Thursday, the 17th November 1927.**

**Chairman:** Mr. Mosser, we are very much obliged to you for coming over here to give us your evidence. I will first put you only a few introductory questions, and let Colonel Crawford ask you the main questions.

How long have you been in India, Mr. Mosser?

**A.** I have been coming to India since 1902 and have been visiting India ever since. I have lived in China for 12 years. I was here five years ago for the United Artists Corporation.

**Q.** I suppose your business is connected with the Metro-Goldwyn Film Corporation of America?

**A.** Yes, I am at present their representative here.

**Q.** For how long have you been connected with this film business?

**A.** For about 20 years.

**Q.** As their Eastern Agent?

**A.** As Manager of production, General Manager of the Company, as producer, in fact, in every line of production. I was New York Production Manager and scenario editor of Goldwyn films until they were absorbed by a syndicate in New York.

**Q.** You said you were in China for 12 years. I suppose you were also there in connection with the film business?

**A.** I went there in connection with a Life Insurance Company as President of the Insular Life Assurance Company of Manila, P. I.

**Colonel Crawford:** Have you any knowledge of production work in India?

**A.** Yes, only so far as my observation went of pictures made in India and the investigations I made with a view to help Miss Maude Adams who wanted to make a film of "Kim" in India.

**Q.** Did you go into the costs of working the studios in India? Can you give us any idea on that subject?

**A.** The cost would be the same as in America or Great Britain so far as the technical side is concerned, *plus* the duty, if you have to pay a duty. I estimate that it would cost you in the neighbourhood of £10,000 for the erection of your studio and for the installation of up-to-date equipment necessary for complete production.

**Q.** Are there any climatic difficulties regarding laboratory work?

**A.** For exteriors, your light is not quite satisfactory. Another thing that they seem to overlook in India is that all outdoor pictures that are made in Hollywood are with the assistance of electric or "X-Ray" lighting followed

by trucks upon which is mounted the machine called a generator. So there is sun light and that is supplemented by the artificial light which gives depth and clearness to the picture. The pictures that are taken, like "The Life of Buddha" and others that I saw in Calcutta, were entirely lacking in quality, I mean those that were taken in the open air. For that reason the Indian studios are entirely impractical so far as foreign audiences are concerned owing to the fact that the results that they obtain from sun light are far inferior to those which you obtain from artificial light. You would be to a certain extent independent of sun light if you had a well-equipped studio with artificial light, because you could take all your scenes in your studio with the aid of Kleigs and Cooper Hewetts and the difficulty of the lack of actinic quality of the sun light in the middle of the day, will be overcome.

*Q.* What about development and printing? Are there any climatic difficulties at work?

*A.* No, sir, except in so far as the natural difficulties that are understood by every photographer and camera man in developing. You must have a certain amount of coolness for your developing tanks and a certain amount of technical experience for developing. As far as I know, they have not proper or adequate facilities for printing and developing in this country.

*Q.* If you were starting a studio out here, would you have your laboratory up in the hills for preference?

*A.* Not necessarily. The climate does not really matter much if you have a proper equipment. For your films there must be a proper repository, that is of concrete, and then they will be immune from all danger. All your stock must be packed and stored properly, otherwise they go bad.

*Q.* For the erection of your studio what sort of locality would you generally select?

*A.* If possible, I would secure a flat piece of ground that is surrounded by a park, if possible, so that you can use it for taking certain scenes outdoor with proper lighting equipment. But it is immaterial. They had a palace here which the Paramount Company used in production and Sir Victor Sassoon can tell you all about it. It was a very well-equipped studio. He probably can get that now for you if it is available. Five years ago they were trying to sell the whole thing.

*Mr. Green:* Is it in Bombay?

*A.* Yes.

*Colonel Crawford:* Is it essential for the studio to be close to a town?

*A.* Not at all. We can have it almost at any place. Of course, producers found it necessary, in America to close their studios in New York for reasons of economy. The Famous Players-Lasky Co. erected at a cost of £200,000 a studio in New York city, with the finest equipment available. They have simply closed it, and are using it for short films and are also renting it out for the reason that they found it infinitely cheaper to make all the films in Hollywood where they have all the facilities, like furniture, props, actors, sets and everything necessary to produce a good film. You have there superior scenario-writers, properties, extra men and women, furniture and everything else which you would otherwise have to make. Another important item is men, and you have got trained men, expert directors and so forth. Speaking of Indian pictures, it would be much better to erect a studio in a large city than to erect one in the hills or anywhere else away from the city, because your director, or whoever is in charge, would have a list of trained people who could always be indentured upon at short notice whenever necessary. All these facilities would be readily available in a large city.

*Q.* Do you think it would be better to concentrate the whole of your industry in one area?

*A.* It would be better infinitely to concentrate the whole of the industry in one part, otherwise your work will be split up, and it will cost you two or three times as much to make your pictures.



*Mr. Green:* That thing has happened in America, is it not?

*A.* Of course, everything in America is centered on the elimination of overhead charges, with the tremendous capital that is invested in the industry. They have invested millions and millions of pounds in this industry. I may say that the film industry is the third industry in America, employing nearly 600,000 people, yet they only make a turn over of from 3½ to 6 per cent. on their money. The technical cost is so great that one who is not versed in motion pictures or production cannot understand or appreciate it. For instance, a picture would cost, say, a hundred thousand dollars, or £20,000 to make in Hollywood. In order to get money back on that, they will have to rent it out for, say, £40,000. The cost of distribution works out at 37½ per cent. to 50 per cent. Now, if you are so fortunate as to make a picture here which would be acceptable in America, it would cost you at least 50 per cent. to market it, and it would cost another 15,000 or 20,000 dollars or £3,000 additional for printing the film, and advertising and exploitation would come to another £2,000. So you see it is not merely a matter of making a picture. The production costs too much in our scheme of operations. Of course, you hear of film magnates, but they have made their fortune, if it can be called a fortune, at the start upon the stock, and also upon the amount which they received as promoters.

*Q.* You say that out of the profits you make in these films, nearly 25 per cent. is consumed in one way or another, and 50 per cent. for the cost of distributing it, and I suppose you cannot introduce a picture into the market except through an agent,—and the other 25 per cent. is consumed on the printing and developing?

*A.* I must explain that formerly we had a great many producers in America. The increase in the cost of production and the acquisition of theatres by different producing companies made it almost impossible for them to continue in business. Now there are probably 30 independent producers as against about 200 producers some years ago.

*Q.* That is the principal part, is it not?

*A.* Yes, the actors, the director and the story are the principal part. Now, if these things are satisfactory to the distributing company, a distributing company will advance 25 per cent. of the cost of production. An additional 50 per cent. will be paid upon delivery of the negative. So they get 75 per cent., and for the balance of 25 per cent. they will have to wait for profits for the picture. There you have the scheme of distribution and co-operation among the smaller concerns.

*Q.* That is to say, the financing of the producer is done by the distributor?

*A.* And the distributor arranges with the exhibitor. He takes it upon himself to see that they get a proper percentage, and for that the distributor gets from 37½ to 50 per cent., which is not profit by any means. If he gets a profit of 10 per cent. after advancing all this money he is lucky. Of course, they do their business now on a fairly sound basis. There are a number of banks there which make it a business to finance producing companies. There is a financial distributor that makes this arrangement.

*Q.* They finance both?

*A.* Through the distributor they finance the producer.

*Q.* 25 per cent. of the finance comes from the distributor. In addition to that, can he get financial help from the banks?

*A.* Yes. First he gets 25 per cent. if the story is satisfactory, then he receives 50 per cent. on the negatives, thus he gets an advance of 75 per cent. on the negative. Now his arrangement is on the basis of a 50 per cent. profit—sometimes only 40 per cent. He is gambling to the extent of 25 per cent. That is to say, if the picture were to cost £20,000, he would get £5,000 when he starts work, or when he makes his contract, and then at stated periods he will draw additional sums until he has had ¾ths of his money. In the other case he gambles himself in some way or other and saves on production, or banking upon a percentage of the earnings of the picture.

**Q.** I believe there are no distributing agencies for Indian films? Is there any necessity for such an agency?

**A.** The preponderance of evidence that I have read in this case would indicate that the largest number of attendants to the theatres where Indian pictures are shown are illiterate and that the illiterate people form the bulk of these audiences; that the educated Indian prefers to go to a theatre where western films are shown. If he is an illiterate man, he won't know whether a film is good or bad, technically, he won't care. So I think it will be better to cater for the illiterate classes. Mr. Madan told me that they had one Indian film on which the cost of production was low and it ran for 19 weeks at one of their theatres. So that those who try to cater for the illiterate classes stand a better chance of making money than the man who tries to make a better class of film. That was the reason why I discussed some time ago a proposition which had for its object the purchase of Madan's interests. I discussed this with Sir Victor Sassoon and my idea at that time was to show cheap films, but to have a number of theatres in which would be shown pictures for Indians exclusively. We wanted to try and produce a better class of pictures at a very low cost of admission, say, at one or two annas, so that the great mass of the people could afford to see them; we wanted to have theatres with a seating capacity for 4,000 to 6,000 people in each town, in addition to the other theatres in which we would show a better type of film. That, to my mind, was the only way in which these theatres could be made more profitable, because otherwise you will be showing pictures to the Indian who cannot afford it. They say that there are 350 millions of people in India, but it is forgotten that about 100 millions sleep on the side walks, and of the rest only a small proportion are in a position to pay one or two annas. That to them is quite a little money. If you can give them a little better quality of film and gradually educate them to appreciate a better class of films, with titles in Gujarati or in any other language of the locality or province, you would be educating the people along proper lines, but so long as you are showing the illiterate people a type of picture that is poorly made (of course, I know they have made pictures dealing with mythological and religious subjects or with folklore), you cannot progress. If you want progress in India, and if you want to educate your people to an appreciation of the better type of film, the only way in which you could do it would be by constructing theatres with a great capacity at a very low price of admission. Eventually, if you could give them synopsis of these pictures—you can have British or American pictures—they will gradually be educated to an appreciation of the better class of film. Now, they know nothing of the psychology of the British or American life. They see people kissing and they consider it indecent. They do not understand our psychology, and we probably do not understand theirs. So the real solution of that would be to give them something little better than they are getting now and gradually educate them up to an appreciation of the motion picture, because it is a thing of great value. That is why we have 20,000 theatres—because these theatres were originally charging two pence, half penny, in the majority of theatres—in America devoted to motion pictures. They have no other form of amusement in the great South-West of America. Our country has an area of 3,500 miles, and the people there go to motion pictures religiously and regularly. They know all the stars and all the players. We have censors in every town of any size.

**Q.** Will H. Hays is paid £20,000 a year?

**A.** He was formerly our Postmaster General. If he said a certain story was not suitable, then it was no use to proceed with it. He is the censor both for the Board as well as for the Government.

**Mr. Green:** Do I understand you to say that they show Mr. Hays the proposed subject before they start producing?

**A.** If there is any criticism, or if it is a story that has been criticised, this goes to Will Hay's readers. If he finds anything objectionable he sends for the producer and says, "Mr. Smith, I think you had better not do this", he

says it in a nice way, of course. Some of our stories cost us as much as £10,000 to £15,000.

*Mr. Coatsman:* Who appointed him?

A. The different film organisations. They are all signatories to the contract. They pay him £20,000 a year.

*Chairman:* He is a great magnate?

A. He was a big man before that. He was Postmaster General and head of the Republican National Committee. He is very keen and very capable.

*Colonel Crawford:* Has India any difficulty as regards actors and actresses?

A. Yes, Sir.

Q. In what way?

A. Insurmountable difficulties. Because it is a case with you of developing certain talents, of having people that will understand and appreciate the value of the screen type, and they are very few. You may try a thousand before you get one.

*Chairman:* You mean for producing pictures which attract the west?

A. No, I mean actors and actresses who will look well on the screen, who will be good screen subjects. So far as the west is concerned, I think you may as well forget it, until you have got far enough along to produce pictures that will count. They won't even be shown in the smaller theatres of America because they would not understand or care for the subjects, not because they would not want your pictures. Just as if we showed our pictures to your illiterates, they would not know what it is about.

Q. Of course, every man wants to see his own world and what he understands.

A. So far as foreign distribution in Great Britain is concerned, of course, there may be an isolated instance of a picture that would get over, but for the great majority of Indian pictures, either in Great Britain or American, you may as well forget that market.

*Colonel Crawford:* Then you are of opinion that we have in India as big a market as we want?

A. I think that you have a great market if properly developed.

*Chairman:* On the lines suggested by you theatres could gradually improve their standard.

A. Yes, Sir. Put up a cheaply constructed building of corrugated iron with big doors that you could throw open very quickly if necessary so that there would be an element of safety. Have the very best, secure the very finest projectors, the fire-proof Simplex projecting machines. They will cost you a little more but they will save you a lot in the end. Because we very seldom have a fire.

*Mr. Green:* You mean theatres in India are not using the latest types of projection machines?

A. No. Every up-to-date theatre in America uses the Simplex which is the standard. Next comes the Powers—

Q. You say the projectors they use at present are more dangerous?

A. Yes, because they are much more liable to catch fire than the new ones which are protected. It is all covered. We have our fire laws and they stipulate that you must have a certain type of projectors, but they don't say Simplex or any other. You heard of the fire a few days ago. That was a terrible thing. That was a frequent thing formerly. That was a theatre run by Armenians. The man has been indicated. If you spend a little more money on your projectors, get men who know how to use them, it is easy enough. They did it in China, where they are using nothing but Simplex and Powers. Simplex will send you over a man who could educate them. But they are the last word in beauty of projection, and in safety and in economy, after purchase of the machines.

*Colonel Crawford:* Well, now, to go back for a moment to actors and actresses, is there any necessity for the people to be educated?

A. Not a bit.

Q. What is the position in the west? You don't draw your actors and actresses from high society, do you?

A. We take them from soda fountains, department-stores, everywhere. Any place where we can find material that will offer to the producer a chance of giving to the public good screen value. It does not matter. They may be unknown to-day and to-morrow they may be getting a thousand pounds a week.

Q. And that is a question of the face.

A. It is a question of photography. She may be a very beautiful woman and yet her photographic value may be nil. It is mathematical. There are certain screen values that are either developed by the camera or lessened. The screen value is a very definite thing. A good cameraman—we pay a very good man £80 a week and another man of less ability £20—he will look at a woman and say: I don't think she will do. We always have a sort of a finder, through which we look at a subject and it gives us his or her photographic value. Then after that we make the screen test.

So far as the Indian audience's requirements are concerned, you would have a different screen value to what you have in the west?

A. I think so. They would be less exacting. They have their own types and I think that you would find a greater variety of subjects in India than we have in America. I have seen people in Peshawar and Kashmir and the Punjab that would have been marvellous. Punjab particularly. I have seen women here whose profile was absolutely perfect. Of course, I could not tell unless I had them screened. Their eyes were beautiful. I think there is a wealth of material in India for local films.

Q. Do you think our Indian producers are getting that material to-day?

A. I think that the Indian producers, *per se*, are guided in their choice by personal reasons generally, not by screen value.

Q. Could one assist them in any way?

A. Oh, yes. If you had a man, say, from America or England, who understood screen values who could go around, and wherever he saw a good subject make a screen test.

*Chairman:* But if we get a man from England or America he would not know the Indian values.

A. You would supplement him with your Indian director. I suggest him simply in order to help out your screen values, you would have an Indian who would know your audience's likes and dislikes. He could go to the director and say: I don't think that this man or this woman would be a good subject.

Q. You mean he could advise him. He would be a sort of Indian advisor to the director.

A. It would be necessary because the British or American would know nothing about the psychology of your audience. That would have to be left to the Indians who would be in charge of that branch.

*Colonel Crawford:* Now then, could you tell me for a moment, as regards western films, we have heard it definitely stated that films are produced in America for the eastern market. Is there anything in that?

A. No. What is the eastern market? In all the East, including Japan, which has 600 theatres against your 60.

*Colonel Crawford:* There are 350 theatres in India.

A. Oh, they are small theatres. Of theatres that would exhibit proper films there are about 60 to 100, 300 altogether including the smaller types. But there are 600 in Japan. It is the greatest market in the East. But taking Japan, China, the Straits Settlement, Java, Sumatra, and India, I don't believe that it is over 5 per cent. of our market. I said 7½. I don't think it is over 5.

*Chairman:* But you know it was seriously stated in the House of Commons during the discussion of the recent Bill that the Americans are spoiling the East by producing special pictures for their screens?

*A.* So far as I know no American pictures are made especially for this market. Their market is at home. 95 per cent. of their pictures are for home consumption.

*Q.* So it is a mere political argument.

*A.* I will give you an instance. Through Madans I secured "The Wreck" of Tagore. A beautiful story. It was the only story I had read by Tagore that I thought had screen value that would get over in America. It is about a college-bred boy who is forced by his father to marry a girl whom he had never seen. He goes to this little village and marries her and a storm comes up and he takes up from an island the girl whom he thinks is the girl he has married. I thought it had great value. I went to "The Famous" and to all the biggest companies in America and none of them would touch it. They said "Yes, I think it is a good story but we cannot sell it to our patrons. We must give them stories of a certain type." So when you say that either Great Britain or America is making pictures for any one locality it is manifestly absurd as even with 200 theatres, our receipts from that are negligible. We get more out of one town, for instance, Cleveland, Ohio, than we get out of the East in a year.

*Colonel Crawford:* Now, do you think that western films shown in this country are of the same standard as those shown in America?

*A.* I think some of them are terrible.

*Q.* Now, what is actually happening?

*A.* Well, a lot of them are being bought by many of the smaller exhibitors out here because they are cheap and they thought they could sell almost anything on this market. But I don't say there is a monopoly in India because there is not. A monopoly would carry the inference that this was the only group of theatres that are showing pictures. But there are any number of theatres here. Madans are the largest because they have money enough to go to America and buy pictures. But there is no monopoly. But you will find of that these pictures which are being shown, that many of them have not been shown in America for years. I have seen some here and said: "I wonder who the producer was?" Then my mind will go back. He probably made pictures 15 years ago. He is forgotten in America. And some of them are terrible.

*Chairman:* Terrible from what point of view?

*A.* They are so poor. Not that they are bad. Poor technically in make-up and dress. They have been made by independent producers generally and they have been sold for a song. The same thing is true of China and Japan. You will see a good picture like those at Madans Theatres—they have the best pictures—and then you will see a lot of poor ones. Theatre-goers in America would not look at them, because of the poor technique and being out-moded, not because it is a bad picture. If it was a bad picture they would not show it because the censors would not pass it.

*Q.* And there are better ones available, so America won't take such things.

*A.* They move so fast in America than even when they show an old Chaplin picture they show it apologetically.

*Colonel Crawford:* But do you think the stories were more crudely treated 15 years ago than they are to-day?

*A.* Oh, infinitely. There have been great improvements on the technical side.

*Chairman:* Well, even that crude state we have not reached yet.

*A.* True, so far as production is concerned in India, because, technically, you have not started. You are doing the best you can. I have seen some

comedies that I thought would be good subjects for the American market. But they are the only good pictures from our standpoint that I have seen.

*Colonel Crawford:* On that question, India's only foreign market really is for comedy subjects?

*A.* I was telling you yesterday, I think, Colonel, that you could make comedy pictures that would carry a good part of your overhead, using Indian subjects such as a fat man, and a dwarf, and a nautch girl. I think that you could make real comedies using Indian scenarios. I saw one made at Howrah station. I saw another one made in the Park. I think they had permission to make it in the Zoo at Calcutta. And these would not only be profitable but would show them something of Indian scenery. Educational pictures, *per se*, get no real money.

*Q.* Well, now, we have had witnesses who considered that there was an attempt sometimes on the part of the American producer to overemphasise what I might call the lower side of life. Now, what is the reason for that?

*A.* The reason for that? They are in this business to make money. They make whatever type of picture within the law that their patrons demand. One day it may be sex, another day it may be comedy, another day it may be the triangle. These pictures are generally made with a view to satisfying the patrons, whether it is Great Britain or America, or any other country, because it doesn't matter where the picture is made. Even after the war, they sent us some pictures from Germany which were more popular than any in America. They called one "Destiny,"—another "Passion,"—stories of the French Revolution. But they were beautiful and they came into America at a time when it was very bad for the Germans, and yet they swept everything before them at the time.

*Chairman:* I suppose in America the censors care for serving public morals?

*A.* Absolutely. Not only do we have Mr. Hays but in almost every city we have a group of women who form censorship committees.

*Mr. Neogy:* Exclusively of women?

*A.* Yes, generally.

*Mr. Coolman:* What legal powers have they?

*A.* They always have a hearing from Will Hays, and Hays not only has the power to exclude stories that are not suitable, but to alter any pictures that are being made if a group of women duly constituted will bring to his notice any subject that is subversive of public morals.

*Chairman:* I mean they have also regard to the injurious effect it may have on the women?

*A.* Yes, and children.

*Colonel Crawford:* Well, now, I take it in America the standard of morals is more advanced than in other countries, isn't it? Take, for instance, your ideas about divorce.

*A.* Surely. Of course, there are some things. But I have seen quite a number of films and the subject is treated in a manner that is not offensive because they have in mind the foreign market—Great Britain and France and others.

*Q.* Do you think the foreign market does affect the censorship to a certain extent?

*A.* Oh, yes. It all has to be taken into consideration.

*Q.* Do you pay any regard to the British market?

*A.* Our producers are making pictures in Great Britain, to be within the quota. We are making pictures there.

*Chairman:* Now you have given us very valuable advice about the progress we should make and in what direction we should make it in developing the industry of this country. Do you think that any American business concern is likely to take up production in this country?

A. In my opinion, not a chance in the world. Unless it is an independent producer. For Maude Adams, our most popular and beloved stage star, wanted to take it up once and screen "Kim." But she decided to enter the laboratory of the General Electric in order to get the experience of lighting, colour photography, the technique of photography. So I think that this is the difficulty for the time being. I arranged a luncheon for her and Sir Victor Sassoon when I was in America and they discussed the possibility of making several pictures in India.

Q. Now you investigated this from the business point of view some time ago. How long was it?

A. Five years ago.

Q. And it did not materialise?

A. Well, I think it will. I think that they are working towards that end. I think that our producers are coming round more to the idea of making pictures in Great Britain and other places where the political advantages are more in view than profit, and I think that when I told you that there is not a chance of their doing business here, I mean independently. They might be induced either by a British organisation or by a private organisation to co-operate in making pictures. But not a company, as such. Not the Metro-Goldwyn or the Famous. They tried once—the Famous, but it did not prove successful financially.

Q. As a commercial proposition, they won't?

A. Not the larger companies.

Q. But they might do it with a political object?

A. Well, you might find some of our independent producers, men of means, who might be willing to do it, and to make a combination of Indian and American or British and Indian producers. When I say political I mean more British than in America. Because their lines are laid more along Indian channels. And I think it would be to their advantages to co-operate. Because now they have had technical experience, they have their directors, they have their studios in Great Britain.

Q. Your advice was to lay stress on constructing theatres all over the country.

A. Yes. That is if you intend to make that a profitable combination. Because it will run you into a lot of money if you go in for these studios alone without having a definite organisation. Because you can very easily invest a lakh of gold dollars or a lakh sterling.

Q. It would be useless unless we have a ready market.

A. Yes, Sir.

Q. May I know what is the average number of copies of average films which are made? I mean the number of copies of each film?

A. Oh, about 20 prints for ordinary pictures. 20 to 40 exclusive of the foreign market. Some of them, the very largest, run up to 80, the super films.

Q. We were led to understand that something like 200 copies are made.

A. Why should they make 200 copies?

Q. Because of the large market, assuming theatres take the same film.

A. I don't think they make ordinarily more than 40 prints of those that they send to different branches for the American market. You see America is divided into certain key cities. The pictures are released first in the key cities and then to the smaller ones. Now 200 would cost you in the neighbourhood of \$310 a print. Say, \$350 a print. Ten prints alone would cost you 3,500 dollars. A hundred prints would cost you 35,000 in gold and 200 prints would cost you 70,000 in gold dollars, and I don't think they can spend that extent of money on an ordinary film.

Q. Now is there any social stigma attached to this profession of acting for the screen?

A. It all depends upon the personnel. You don't find any stigma attaching to Mary Pickford or Douglas Fairbanks.

Q. It depends on the person himself?

A. Absolutely.

Q. Now, you don't think that American companies who send pictures to India, are likely to take up production?

A. No, Sir. I am confident that Famous wouldn't do it because they did it once before and I don't think they were financially successful.

Q. Perhaps, they didn't begin it in earnest. They lost their man or something.

A. It is no advantage. If they want to make it they can do it in New York, why should they make it in India?

Q. Do you think they can make Indian pictures?

A. They have. Did you see "The Thief of Baghdad?"

Q. It had an oriental flavour about it. Supposing we send Indian students to America for learning or improving their technical knowledge of the subject of film making, will they get easy admission?

A. I think so. All that you would need to do is to write to the heads of the companies and they would give you letters so that they could obtain admission to the studios easily. They do not like that as a rule.

Q. You may limit the number.

A. They do not even allow visitors now, because it holds up production. As you know, the costs are so great that the loss of even 20 minutes means thousands of dollars.

Q. These students would be learning the work when they are there? They would be with the people who work there?

A. If you get into touch with, say, Douglas Fairbanks, or with the studio heads and make arrangement with them, I do not think there would be any trouble.

Mr. Green. Through private individuals or through the Government?

A. Government officials.

Q. If it is done through Government more attention will be paid to it?

A. Yes, absolutely.

Q. Private individuals might find it difficult?

A. Yes. If you communicate with the Consuls you might be able to push matters through.

Q. It would have to be official?

A. Yes. Otherwise they pay no attention. They have been establishing Chairs in all the larger colleges, in Harvard and in Yale, for instance, for the motion picture. They realise its effect and in its influence.

Chairman: There is one other point on which I want your advice. For educational and public health propaganda and such other purposes which are more of the nature of public utility type, do you think that a studio should be established by Government in this country?

A. I doubt it. It might be a Government subsidy. We have found that it is very difficult to combine Government and private enterprise, because there would be the question of profits and other things. Every Government official has a thousand relatives and I think you would find it very difficult. I think this should simply be under the management of an expert and not be interfered with, and any Government assistance should be in the form of a subsidy.

Colonel Crawford: Might I pursue that question? Do you think that private enterprise would produce these films of a public utility nature?

A. Yes, with the subsidy they would.



*Q.* When you are giving subsidies to the industry in any way would you make that one of your conditions, the production of certain percentage of educational films?

*A.* Certainly. The G. I. P. Railway I understand you to say, are not making a very good quality, but I understand they are covering all India and if they have proper technical assistance, with their facilities, they will probably turn out some very beautiful material. Why in Kashmir, in Srinagar, Peshawar, all through the north you can get marvellous material. I had some pictures which were taken up there and sent home. They are lovely. I do not think that that alone would be able to pay the amount of expense. They are not definitely enough interested. We had our Educational Film Corporation. A Mr. Hammons lost a hundred thousand pounds and it was taken over by another company.

*Chairman:* Can you tell us what they do in Germany for producing educational films? They are spoken of very highly.

*A.* They do some very beautiful work.

*Q.* Who does it for them?

*A.* I think it was done in association with U. F. A. and one of the large German banks.

*Q.* With Government aid?

*A.* They advanced a lot of money for the assistance of U. F. A. Film Company and others and they gave a very big loan. Technically Germans do beautiful work.

*Q.* Supposing you got out an expert on contract to train people here, as producers?

*A.* Why not get them from Germany?

*Q.* What will it cost?

*A.* We pay a director anything from £100 to £2,000 a week, but if you go to Germany and watch the work of directors and then select some of the men, I have no doubt you could get good men on a yearly salary whose assistance would be of very great value. That is what I would do if I were doing it.

*Q.* That will be the cheapest place to get good men from?

*A.* Yes. And they are turning out a very fine quality of film now, the raw product. I think Germany would be the place for you, that is, if you are going in for technical assistance.

*Mr. Green:* I should like to thank you for your most instructive evidence. You said that it will be possible with Government assistance to get men trained in America?

*A.* Or in Germany, technical.

*Q.* In America one would presumably have to pay a premium, or would one get admission . . .

*A.* They would cost you more than they would in Germany.

*Q.* Do they take anything in the way of a premium in America?

*A.* I would send a man there. He will watch them doing their work in the Studios and how they are doing it, and then you may make the contract. The Germans are very thrifty and in America you would have to pay a man at the very least—you have to guarantee at least 30 weeks salary at £50 a week for a director. And the man that you get should be a technical director, one who would understand direction as well the technical side of the business.

*Q.* I was referring to this, if we send a man merely for training in America or in any other foreign country.

*A.* I would send them to Germany. It is closer, living is cheaper, and they have every facility so far as the technical side is concerned.

*Q.* One disadvantage is the language.

*A.* That could be overcome. They are speaking English all over Germany now. You can get an interpreter or let the man learn German. To get an interpreter costs very little.

**Q.** You told us that some of the big American concerns were thinking of starting in England for the purpose partly of getting the advantage of the quota?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Do you think that they also have in view the fact that they do consider in England that English life is frequently misrepresented in American films?

**A.** They probably realise that, due to the directors lack of knowledge of English life.

**Q.** You have no doubt heard about an institution called the "British Instructional Films Limited?"

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Do you think they are any good from the commercial point of view?

**A.** Commercially no.

**Q.** Is that because it is British or because it is instructional?

**A.** For the same reason that Hammons lost so much money. People do not like it if it is purely educational. In entertainment they will swallow a certain amount of education. As long as there is a certain amount of entertainment they will swallow some education.

**Q.** But the mere name of this institution was enough to damn it commercially?

**A.** Yes.

*Colonel Crawford:* Do you think that Government is justified in saying, "You should run in your programme a film of an educational nature."

**A.** They do that any how. Almost all our programmes have a travel picture or something of that kind, either topical or news. That is the way we do it. We give it to them in the form of "Topical News." We show London, we show Paris, a scene from Burma, a scene from India and so on. We have camera men going all over the world.

**Q.** To do the film?

**A.** Yes. Looking for interesting subjects. Instead of calling it "educational" we call it "Topical News."

**Q.** Do you show anything in the nature of natural history films?

**A.** Some beautiful ones.

**Q.** And they have a great entertainment value?

**A.** Yes. Some of them are beautifully made by Bruce and Hadman.

*Mr. Green:* Is that a paying concern?

**A.** Yes, because it is not put on as educational and the cost of production is small. Probably the man has his own camera and he goes out and takes his pictures. Or the man has his own camera man for the work. America is divided into certain producing groups and for showing pictures you have to show your pictures through one of the organisations. So a man would take a very beautiful film and he would tell an executive of one of these organisations, "I have got a good film and will you exhibit it?" On that they will say, "We will pay you so much" and he is paid. They do not call it educational. They call it "Moonlight," "Sunrise In The Mountains" and things of that kind.

*Mr. Green:* Then there is opening even for the small man there?

**A.** Yes, if he knows the game and if he has brains and the product and goes to these organisations with it he will have a good opening.

*Mr. Coatman:* I would like to thank you very much for your instructive evidence. Most of my questions have been asked and I have got only one or two to ask you. You said that the cost of erecting a studio with suitable equipment and all that would be about £10,000?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Would that cost include all the appliances necessary for correcting the atmospheres?

A. You do not need anything to correct the atmospherics. All you need is a generator on a truck with a light. I think Sir Victor can give you all the details because he paid his proportion and he knows just exactly what it cost to instal his plant and he can give you more general information about the whole thing than myself.

Mr. Neogy: You gave us an estimate that a studio would cost £10,000. Is that absolutely the minimum?

A. No. That is not the minimum. That was my estimate as to the cost of the latest equipment. That could be shaded and could be lessened by buying a good portion of your stuff in Germany. It might even cost you £5,000, and it would depend a great deal upon how much money you want for the erection of your studio, the size of the material used, the cost of construction—how much it would cost for ordinary construction . . .

Mr. Green: It is very expensive in Bombay.

Mr. Neogy: Have you ever visited any of the studios that we have in Bombay?

A. I have visited the studios in Calcutta.

Q. What I am anxious to understand is, what would be the capacity for work of the studio that you have in mind?

A. Two companies.

Q. Two companies of the existing Indian type? What would be the footage that they could turn out?

A. It would depend upon the capacity of the director. You have two companies working. It would depend upon how long it takes you to turn out a picture.

Q. We have five studios in Bombay and what I am anxious to know is whether the studio that you have in mind would be able to turn out the work which all these five studios can do together?

A. If you have 20 studios working now which are not properly equipped they would not be capable of turning out one picture, because they would not have the necessary technical knowledge or equipment. That is the main thing.

Q. What I wanted to know was this, whether by combining the existing studios you could start a studio on your lines?

A. I do not know anything about the present studios. I have not seen them, but from what I have heard they must be pretty bad in comparison with the studios in England, Germany or America.

Q. You said that you would go in for a cheaper kind of film to start with, to suit the pockets of the poorer classes in India. Do you think you would require a studio of the description you have given even for the manufacture of that kind of film?

A. Not for the type of films that they are making now. I do not think that you would need any.

Q. To make the type of film which you have in mind and which might be undertaken before you lead on to a higher standard?

A. I do not think you could make any of the better class pictures in your present studios unless you have proper equipment. It does not matter what the studio may be, but you ought to have proper lights.

Q. Even for the cheaper kind of film which you think might be given to the Indian audience, even that would require?

A. I do not think so. I think you could make the type of film which is being given to the Indian audience at present in the present studios.

Chairman: With certain improvements?

A. Yes.

Mr. Neogy: For this studio that you refer to, how many experts would you require to bring out from abroad and in what branches?

A. One who would combine studio manager and supervisor, then a good director with an assistant, one or two cocking good camera men, that is very important. Bell and Howell camera is the standard. A good supervisor-director would probably show you how to save a lot of money, and at least some of the people that you have here, some of the people that have been working on the pictures,—they could improve their work and educate them along the lines of up to date production. They would be the nucleus.

Q. How much do you think they would cost per month to start with?

A. Another thing is you would require an up to date electrician and a property man, a man that is accustomed to building in sets—all these sets are built in as high as this book case.

Q. Supposing you brought all these men from the cheapest country, say, Germany, what would be the cost?

A. That I do not know. That would depend upon your man who went over there. I know what they cost us in America.

Q. How much would it cost you to bring them from America?

A. You will have to pay your studio manager or supervisor £2,000 a year. You would have to pay your director at least £50 a week.

Q. And his assistant?

A. You may be able to get a good Indian assistant here.

Q. Camera man?

A. From £30 to 50 a week.

Q. And they would expect much more for coming to India?

A. I doubt it. You could get them from Germany on an yearly basis.

Q. What about the electrician and the property man?

A. The electrician would probably cost you, a good one, about £15 a week and a property man will cost you about the same. He would be both a property man and carpenter who could build sets and instruct others.

Q. This in your opinion would constitute the minimum complement necessary for working the particular studio which you have in mind?

A. Yes.

Q. You mentioned a sort of assessor or screen valuer . . .

A. That can be done by the director or supervisor.

Q. That is the function of the studio manager?

A. Yes, and the director. They would, of course, work with your Indians who would be able to tell them the type that your people would prefer.

*Chairman:* And this cost will diminish as you train Indians?

A. Yes.

*Mr. Neegy:* For how long would you recommend these men to be brought out in the first instance?

A. Six months or a year. It might be possible to educate your technical men within six months, but I doubt it, and I think it will be better to have them for a year.

Q. Would it be better to send out Indians from here to get the necessary training in all these branches, either in Germany or America, than bringing out these experts?

A. It might be better to do this. It might be better to select Indians that you think would be most susceptible to training, send them to Germany first and then arrange for the technical men to come back with these Indians, because Indians will absorb a certain amount of technique and the working of the studios there if you have access to Ufa . . .

Q. That is to say, you would prefer their being trained in the first place in Germany?

A. Absolutely.

Q. And then they should come out with the technical expert from there?

A. Yes, and he could work with them and then gradually develop your style.

Q. Now talking about Germany, you said Germany would be a very cheap place. That is one of the reasons why you recommend Germany in preference to America. I want to draw your attention to what the *Film Daily* in its issue of June 27, 1926, says:

"It seems certain the industry in America will turn to Germany to freshen jaded ideas, to get a new slant on production. Important American directors who have visited Berlin have expressed amazement at the results obtained in principal studios there, notably those of Ufa."

Even from the point of view of merit don't you think that Germany would be the very best country for Indians to go?

A. Yes. As regards technique their work is beautiful. No doubt the films that came from Germany were absolutely unsuitable in America and we had to cut them down to our length and re-title them before we could even show them,—with "Passion," with "Destiny," with "Variety," with "Metropolis."

Colonel Crawford: In that film "Metropolis" the technique is amazing. I think it is worth while seeing it from the point of view of technique, and also "Variety."

Mr. Neogy: You mentioned that in the universities of Harvard and Yale they have established chairs for motion pictures?

A. Yes.

Q. Do they teach all the branches of the industry?

A. Yes. They deliver lectures as they do in other subjects. Eminent men come and deliver lectures, men in the line.

Q. Have the students an opportunity of getting practical experience also in these places?

A. At the Columbia University the students have access to some of the studios. The training that they get is elementary training.

Q. Then you expect them to supplement that?

A. Yes.

Q. And if you were to send out any Indians for training you would recommend their preliminary training in these universities before they go into the studios?

A. No.

Q. Indians have graduated from these two universities that you have mentioned, and it would not be difficult for us to find Indians to go there and get training in these branches.

A. You would only take advantage of a certain number of lectures at these universities whereas if you were to go to the studios you would get practical experience and there is a great deal of difference between lectures and practical experience.

Colonel Crawford: Would you suggest that we should select our students to go abroad from amongst people who are already working in the studios here and who have got a ground knowledge of it?

A. They have got a ground knowledge, but you do not know much about their character or their ability, or how far they have progressed, or whether it would be not better to take a man who had a certain amount of strength of character and ability, physical strength and all that. All these things must be considered because the trouble with a great many of the Indians that I have met is not so much their lack of application as their lack of stamina, physical. They cannot stand the strain, and it is a terrific strain making pictures.

**Mr. Neogy:** You stated that certain German pictures were very much appreciated in America. Is there any prejudice in America against any foreign picture because it is manufactured in a foreign country?

**A.** We are not the judges; it is the people that buy the tickets. They do not say it is German, it is English and so on,—these pictures. They would not go to see pictures that they do not like or are not up to their standard, but they do not care whether they are English, or German or Indian. If it is a picture they want to see they will go in for it and they will demand it.

**Q.** Is there any tariff barrier against foreign films there?

**A.** None at all. The most successful films shown in America are the foreign films. For instance the German "Destiny", "Pharaoh's Wife", "Metropolis", "Passion", "Variety", etc. I think those are the most successful pictures from the monetary point of view.

**Q.** You do not think there is any reason for Indians to think that even if they can turn out first class pictures, they would not have a market in America?

**A.** It would all depend on the subject. Your American will only come to see pictures of which the subject interests him. If he is not interested in the subject he won't come. It will be shown one night and the next night there won't be 20 people in the theatres and the man who runs the theatre will take it off.

**Q.** Is there anything inherent in Indian subjects which in your opinion is likely to militate against Indian pictures being appreciated in America?

**A.** Not if they carry a certain entertainment and amusement value. The American is not American. The only American we have is the Indian and they are rapidly dying out. We are the great melting pot; we are a little bit of the world, and it does not matter whether it is Indian, French or German, they would give the same consideration to it as they would to an American film.

**Oral Evidence of Mr. D. HEALY, Commissioner of Police, and President, Bombay Board of Censors, on Thursday, the 17th November 1927.**

**Chairman:** Mr. Healy I think we had you the other day for a very long time. Now you are representing the Government of Bombay. You read to us a statement the other day on behalf of your Government.

**A.** Two statements which I read the last time were really the views of the Bombay Government. They are not the words of the Bombay Government but the substance of communications which I have had from the Bombay Government.

**Q.** Have you not got them in writing?

**A.** Not with me.

**Q.** Can you send them to us?

**A.** The statement which I made?

**Q.** Yes.

**A.** I will.

**Q.** I am sorry I forgot to ask you for this the other day.

**A.** One as you will remember was in connection with the Central Board as against Provincial Boards and the other was the question of Preference.

**Q.** Now I should like to know whether the Bombay Government,—what the view of the Bombay Government would be in case studios for education and public propaganda purposes were established; with regard to financing them would they prefer to have these studios under the Provincial Gov-

ernment or would they prefer to have a pooling system in which all Governments should join?

A. I think they are against financing any films or studios; that is their view.

Q. But I mean even their own studio, what do they propose to do as regards their educational propaganda? The other day the gentleman in charge of Visual Instruction told us he would welcome the establishment of a studio where educational films could be made.

Mr. Green: He was speaking for himself. He said he had not put it to the Government.

Chairman: What would be the view of your Government, have you any information or instructions on that subject?

A. I have no instructions.

Q. The Minister for Education or the head of the Education Department would be able to say perhaps. I presume somebody represents the Education Department. We take it you have been instructed by the Government of Bombay only on those two questions.

Mr. Green: I gathered that they consider it in the nature of a luxury trade and they are not prepared to spend anything.

Chairman: Do they consider education a luxury?

A. No. They discussed the matter with me as regards subsidising Indian films against foreign films. They did not enter into the question of educational propaganda.

Q. I am going to ask you about that but I am now dealing with a subject not mentioned in that statement, education and public utility films. But as you say you are not instructed, I will not trouble you. Now as regards this aid to the Indian film industry, is it the Bombay Government's view that things should be left as they are to face competition?

A. That is their view.

Q. They are not inclined to give preference to indigenous concerns?

A. No.

Q. Are they aware that the rate of import of foreign films is much faster than the rate of progress of the Indian film industry?

A. You mean the progress of the Indian film industry is not advancing at an equal rate?

Q. Advancing much less than what the importing rate is; are they aware of that?

A. I cannot say.

Q. I suppose the gentleman to ask about it would be the Minister for Industry. Is there a Minister for Industry?

A. I think the Director of Information is also the Director of Industry.

Q. There is no other separate gentleman in charge of Industries as we have in Madras?

A. No.

Q. Well, then it is awkward for us to trouble you about these points.

A. I do not think the Bombay Government have considered the subject from that point of view.

Mr. Green: I am sorry to have to revert to a point. I understand Mr. Healy has been instructed by the Government of Bombay, and from the statement he read out to us I take it the attitude of the Government of Bombay is fairly simple. This is in fact a luxury trade and they will have nothing to do with it. They don't want preference or protection but would leave the trade to its own devices, except to improve the censorship, if anything is recommended though they are generally satisfied with the existing arrangement.

A. They are satisfied with the existing arrangement but would welcome any improvement on our system as a result of your enquiry.

Q. And it seems to me to follow as a corollary to that attitude that is quite clear they have not considered specifically and have not instructed you on their policy as regards education in any aspect?

A. No.

Q. Therefore I take that if they want educational films they think it should be considered quite apart from the commercial aspect.

A. I do not know what their views are but I think if they had any I would have been informed. I do not believe they have considered the question at all.

Q. Were you not officially instructed by your Government as to their views?

A. I was asked to appear as their official representative.

Q. Only one other question. I think opinion is possibly hardening that the censorship might be improved, if we can afford it, by having films examined always by two members.

A. My personal opinion is certainly in favour of censorship by two Inspectors instead of one.

Mr. Neogy: Which department of the Government of Bombay deals with Cinemas?

A. The Home Department.

Q. Then you derive your instructions to-day from the Home Department?

A. Yes.

Q. Had you an opportunity of consulting the Finance Department about the financial aspects?

A. No.

Q. Or has the Government of Bombay as a whole considered this subject?

A. I do not believe they have.

Q. Either in the Executive Council or the Governor acting with the Ministers?

Mr. Green: If he was instructed by the Government of Bombay must we not assume that he represents the view of the Government as a whole?

Mr. Neogy: Not necessarily.

Mr. Green: May I suggest that we verify that by approaching the Bombay Government later?

### **Written Statement of Mr. S. K. BOLE, J.P., M.L.C., Dadar, dated the 10th November 1927.**

2. (a) My experience is limited to the City of Bombay. About 40 per cent. of the advanced class and about 60 per cent. of the backward classes compose the spectators who frequent the several cinema houses.

(b) The cinema houses in Bombay have sprung up in different localities in proportion to the need of such localities. In localities which have been inhabited chiefly by working classes the audiences from such classes at the cinema houses do naturally preponderate and the proportion indicated in the answer of (a) varies from 60 to 90 per cent.

(c) About 10 per cent.

3. Mythological and historical.

4. No; because the exhibitors are unable to secure films which would attract and satisfy Indians, as very few intelligent and ingenious men who can command sufficient capital have taken to this trade of producing films.



5. No; because the number of film-making companies is very small and their products are very slow owing to the want of sufficient means.

(a) No.

(b) Yes, because better stuff is not available.

(c) Indian films are more popular and their exhibition is more profitable. Films such as 'Lanka Dahan,' 'Sinhagad,' 'Goolbakawali,' 'Kalonath'.

6. (a) Yes.

(1) To the educated classes—Historical.

(2) To the illiterate classes—Mythological.

8. (a) No.

(b) Real business men who can command sufficient capital have not yet come to think that this industry is worth going in for and that it would be profitable if intelligently and carefully managed. The producers of films are greatly handicapped by the paucity of persons from higher classes who can take to theatricals.

14. Yes.

At present the demand for such films is very limited. Our Educational Authorities, Health Officers and other Public Bodies have hardly realized the utility of adopting this means of educating children and adults.

15. They are, if only intelligent men take to its technic.

16. Men having such knowledge are very likely to grow in number in course of time.

17. In proportion to the popularity of this means of amusement those who take to this trade are likely to make profits and capitalists are likely to invest their capital in the trade.

21. No.

## PART II.

24. (a) Films exhibiting exploits of dacoits, crooks and hooligans are decidedly injurious to the morals.

(b) Yes.

(c) Films exhibiting exciting scenes and sexdramas, are very harmful to raw youths and uncultured adults, who are prone to imitate what they see.

(d) (1) and (2) No.

(e) Yes.

(f) I have, as an Honorary Presidency Magistrate, personal knowledge of juvenile criminals whose tendencies to crime have been developed by witnessing cinemas.

25. Yes.

26. (a) Yes.

29. Yes.

30. Yes, because their minds are highly impressionable. Children below 15 should not be allowed.

33. (a) No.

(b) No.

(c) No.

34. Yes, because the Provincial Boards prove handicaps to the easy and unimpeded circulation of films. For instance, films passed by one Provincial Board are at times prohibited by another Board as the censorship depends almost entirely on the predilections of the censors.

(2) No.

(3) It must be sufficiently representative, highly intelligent and having high moral standard. A large portion of the Board should be represented by Indians.

(4) Bombay.

(b) No.

35. (a) No. No. They must be well cultured and holding high moral standard.

(b) Yes. Yes.

37. (b) Yes.

38. Yes. Posters should also be submitted to censors for approval. Yes, the very sight of some of the posters is sufficient to suggest immoral ideas.

45. (a) No.

(b) Yes.

**Oral Evidence of Mr. S. K. BOLE, J.P., M.L.C., Dadar, on Thursday, the 17th November 1927.**

*Chairman* : Do you represent any society?

A. I am connected with several associations but I am not representing them here.

Q. I see you live at Dadar.

A. I live at Dadar.

Q. I suppose you have lived there all along?

A. I have been there for the last 16 years. I was staying before that near Bendi Bazaar.

Q. You are a Bombay citizen?

A. I am a Bombay citizen.

Q. Are you familiar with conditions in the mofussil?

A. I was born in the mofussil and am still connected with the mofussil. I was born in the Ratnagiri district.

Q. You are keeping yourself in touch with the mofussil?

A. Yes.

Q. I don't suppose there are many cinemas in Ratnagiri?

A. None.

Q. So your experience is confined to Bombay?

A. Yes.

Q. Which cinema do you frequent?

A. I go occasionally to the cinema.

Q. And when you occasionally go where do you go?

A. When there are benefit performances, charity performances, I go or otherwise with friends.

Q. But I mean when you go with friends where do you go?

A. I go to the Fort as well as to the mill districts where cinemas have been newly started at Parel.

Q. Have you visited the Lakshmi theatre?

A. I have visited the Venus theatre and also the Lakshmi theatre.

Q. It is the nearest cinema to Dadar.

A. Yes. They are going to have one at Dadar also.

Q. Now I went there casually yesterday because we heard a lot about these northern theatres being kept in a dirty condition. I did not want to give notice, so I paid a surprise visit as a casual visitor to the Lakshmi theatre. Do you go there often?

A. No. Sometimes.

Q. The highest rate levied there is nine annas. I could not get a better seat than 9 annas. And the lowest is 3 annas.

A. Yes.

Q. What do you think is collected from an ordinary performance at the Lakshmi theatre?

A. I have no idea.

Q. I concluded about 300 people were present mostly in the lower class; so they must get about Rs. 40 to Rs. 50 per performance.

A. It must be so.

Q. Now, I suppose you are aware that the Indian films are getting popular with such class of people?

A. Yes.

Q. And do you think that the Indian film industry requires any extraneous aid for developing it.

A. Yes, I think it is necessary for intelligent persons to take some interest in the industry.

Q. Why don't intelligent persons in Bombay take an interest?

A. They think it is not a profitable concern.

Q. That is the general opinion?

A. Yes.

Q. If it was a profitable concern you think they would take to it?

A. Yes.

Q. I should like to ask you on one aspect of the question, as you are a citizen of Bombay and probably a parent and head of a family. Do you think the cinema has any vicious influence on the Indian public?

A. Yes it has.

Q. Which—the Indian pictures or the Western pictures?

A. Mostly the Western pictures.

Q. What sort of vicious influence?

A. When they see scenes in connection with kissing and embracing and nude dances, of course that has a demoralising effect.

Q. Do you advocate a stricter censorship on that ground? Is it because it causes injury to the Indian public?

A. Yes, because it causes injury.

Q. That is your considered opinion in the matter?

A. Yes. In the case of Indian films also, mythological films, such things occur, as when the picture of Krishna is shown on the screen and he is depicted as a nude figure.

Q. Which picture have you in mind?

A. Krishna Jamma.

Q. I know it is a most popular picture with the Indian public.

A. That is all right; but there are some obscene scenes in it. Krishna should be regarded as a great religious teacher.

Q. Not a teacher, an incarnation.

A. Yes, an incarnation.

Q. And of course Krishna's life is associated with the Gopis.

A. That should not be allowed.

Q. You mean to say Hindus do not understand?

A. The lower classes do not understand.

Q. I am afraid you have a very poor estimate of Hindus.

A. The Puranas themselves should be divested of these incidents.

Q. And you want Krishna's life re-written?

A. Yes.

Q. You don't believe it was as told in the Puranas?

A. That is only poetical imagination.

Q. You don't believe the Gopis were incarnations?

A. I don't believe. It is believed mostly by superstitious people, not educated people.

Q. What you call educated I don't know. It is so difficult to know because everybody claims to be educated now-a-days.

A. Social reformers particularly, they don't believe in such things.

Q. You have to understand it in the true light. No Hindu will find it difficult to understand Krishna's life. Then again from your point of view the censorship should be done by two or three members of the Board—that is essential?

A. Yes.

Q. It should not be left to only one individual?

A. No.

Q. As a rule every film should be inspected by 2 or 3 members of the Board. Now do you think there is sufficient public capacity forthcoming for you to have a big panel from which you can choose?

A. Yes.

Mr. Green: You have had special knowledge of mill hands and also of the present atmosphere; and you consider that not only Western films but Indian films also cause demoralisation.

A. Yes, but not to the same extent.

Q. Western films are the worst?

A. Western films do a great deal of harm.

Q. Do they see any Western films?

A. Yes, they also see those scenes when they are depicted there.

Q. But evidence has been given before us that they mostly frequent cinemas in the north where they see only Indian pictures.

A. They also go elsewhere.

Q. They also go to Lannington Road and so on and there they see Western films?

A. Yes.

Q. You say in reply to question no. 24 "immoral or criminal films do circulate" and yet you seem fairly satisfied with the censorship.

A. I am not satisfied.

Q. In answer to question 34 I see you like the idea of a Central Board but your reason for that is that the present provincial boards in different places impede the circulation of films.

A. Sometimes they do.

Q. If you want to strengthen your censorship surely you should welcome the fact that provincial boards can step in and say "We don't like that film" and get Government to proscribe it.

A. It is an impediment. Once the Central Board passes a film there should be no objection.

Q. You think the Central Board should be so provincial in its judgment that no local authority could possibly object to its decisions?

A. If it is thoroughly representative, if they come from the provinces.

Q. Where would the Central Board sit?

A. In Bombay.

Q. Then we should have to have representatives from Madras, the Punjab and so on.

A. There are many men from Madras, the Punjab, etc., who are residing in Bombay.

Q. Do they come here because Bombay is the best place in India or on business?

A. For business or service.

Q. If they are in business how will they find time.

A. They may not mind doing some social service.

Q. Have you any idea of the volume of work that would be necessary if all the films were examined in Bombay by a Central Board?

A. No, I have no idea.

Q. The film examination would go on every day for 8 hours year in and year out on the present basis, and if representatives from each province had to say they see no provincial objection, all those persons would have to work all day.

A. But if the panel is big enough, then by turns they can do that work.

Q. But I put it to you we have not got enough men here from the Punjab to create a panel, so that one man can work for a full day.

A. When would his next turn come?

Q. If you had 3 gentlemen he would work every 3 days; if we had 10 gentlemen he would work every tenth day. Can you get them? How many Punjabi gentlemen do you know in Bombay who would be prepared to do this sort of thing?

A. No, I don't know any.

Q. In answer to question 35 (b) you seem to like the suggestion that there should be a Board with paid officials. Would it meet the objection I have just raised if you had one or more well paid officials who would examine the films and refer to the Board any doubtful questions?

A. I think it would be better if the members of the Board do this.

Q. Supposing it is not practicable. If you refer to our question 35 (b), the question is "Would you prefer a whole time experienced well paid officer censor at each centre to be assisted by an advisory Board of non-officials?" Your answer is "Yes."

A. Yes, my answer is that.

Q. Isn't that inconsistent with the view you have just put forward about the Central Board?

A. If that is not practicable.

Q. Then you would like what you have said in answer to question 35 (b).

A. Yes.

**Written Statement of Mr. PHEROZESHAH J. MARZBAN, M.A.,  
J.P., M.L.C., Editor, "Jam-e-Jamshed."**

**INTRODUCTORY.**

1. Though not connected with the Cinematograph Industry itself either in India or abroad exclusively or to a degree of intimacy which the actual producers or exhibitors would have, I have had for the space of the last seven years in my capacity as an editor of a daily vernacular paper,—"The Jam-e-Jamshed"—ample opportunity to witness hundreds of productions mainly American and British and several Indigenous. In fact it has been a part of my work to review many of these exhibits, mainly from the point of view of the story, the acting, the technique, the standard of morality and artistic taste. I have been brought into and am still in close contact with the Indian Cinematograph Industry in this country on account of the publicity work of several Cinemas entrusted to me—to wit, the West End (now closed), the Wellington, the Precious, the Royal Opera House, and some half a dozen picture-house of Messrs. Madan Theatres Limited. This publicity work, which I have been doing for the space of last seven years, has acquainted me with the ethical, the industrial and the commercial aspects of this Industry.

In addition to this, three Indian films, viz., (1) The "Handsome Black-guard" (9,000 feet), (2) The "Slaves of Custom" (6,000 feet) and (3) the "Curse of Ignorance," (6,000 feet) owe their origin and direction to my humble self.

## GENERAL.

2. (a) With reference to the City of Bombay, with the picture houses of which place I am connected in the capacity mentioned above, I may state (1) that educated Indians do frequent the Cinemas on a large scale, and certain Cinemas usually attract quite a large proportion of the educated visitors, especially theatres in the Fort and Dhobi Talao areas. (2) The attendance of the illiterate classes is on the increase latterly and these frequent usually picture houses situate at Grant Road, Play House and the northern side of our Island. The extent of the increase of the attendance may be best judged from the fact that in Bombay there are about 19 Cinemas.

(b) Unless we take care to refer to the exact portion of the locality, an idea of the composition of the average cinema audience is likely to be misleading. It depends so much upon the particular locality, the Cinema and the film released. Thus in the first class of picture houses referred to in the above paragraph, the proportion of educated cinema-goers would no doubt be greater. In the second type, the illiterate class would predominate. Again both freely frequent the same Cinema if a super production or comic film with a favourite actor is released. By the illiterate class I would have you to understand not merely that class the members of which are unable to sign their name in their own vernacular—a standard adopted for judging literacy at the time of census—but persons who have no education worth the name, even primary.

(c) An average cinema audience in India would contain a rather small percentage of children under 14, which I would put approximately at 10 per cent. However a considerable part of it would consist of adolescents of impressionable age, which I would put not less than 50 per cent.

## PART I.

*Film Industry in India.*

3. Speaking of the class of films most popular with Indians and generally in India, I should say that we should bear well in mind the types of audience which see the "Movies". The educated class of audience, which, as I have explained above, frequent a particular set of picture-houses such as the Excelsior, the Empire, the Wellington, the Opera House prefer to see American and some British films, being able to understand the mode of Western life and frequently being interested in historical films. With this class not only films depicting historical events are popular but also comic films in which some famous actor or actors figure. To the audience frequenting picture houses in Grant Road or Parel locality Indian films appeal in a greater degree, though prior to the exhibition of Indian films depicting Indian life and history American films of action "with some pep in them" exclusively monopolised this class. They are equally attracted to comic films as these are easily understood, full of funny action and capable of infusing some pleasure in the none too happy life of the illiterate. Though Indian films are now gaining this class of audience, the lure films of action, usually pictures showing adventure still attracts large audience.

I may say if we bear this educational division, and the natural results following from these, in mind we shall find that it is difficult to say what class of films would be most popular in India generally. India is such a vast sub-continent and the communities vary so widely in their religion, culture, tastes and traditions that it would be an exceptionally fortunate production that commanded large attendance from all sections of the country. However in so far as human nature is the same, we may say that productions of a comic character which tend to relieve the monotony of the average Indian life and bring a little sunshine in Indian homes, do as a matter of fact command universal popularity. Even superproductions cannot be placed on the same high pedestal, for the average Indian population is illiterate, (the

percentage of literacy in India is only 64 per cent.) and the underlying and partly hidden beauties, the hidden art and the wonderful technique which go to make a film great, would be missed by most of the people with the unmistakable consequence of the films not finding favour with the masses. Thus for a film to be generally popular in India what would be needed is not supreme excellence but a level of production comprehensible by the average Indian mind. I do not mean any reflection to Indian intelligence. I only look in the face a grim reality which the colossal ignorance prevailing in the country confronts us with.

4. Catering for Indian audience by exhibitors is adequate though no doubt much that is desired remains to be done. There is no express desire on the part of exhibitors to ascertain the tastes of the audience and then try to exhibit something to suit their tastes generally. In fact this could be only possible in case of indigenous productions as otherwise the exhibitors have to put up with whatever films are available from abroad. Generally speaking the commercial instinct of the exhibitors achieves this end without they themselves being conscious of achieving it.

5. I should think that Indian-produced films, depicting Indian life, are readily available, but of course in a limited number, due to the paucity of producers. There are only five or six studios in the City, and though such films are available it would be better for the public if more of them depicting different phases of Indian life are exhibited.

(a) Unfortunately what is available in this class of films is not of good quality. Here and there a production may outshine the rest and compare favourably with some of the most-applauded foreign products; but for such rare exceptions, the average quality is very inferior.

(b) Paradoxical as it may seem, though they are not of the desired quality they are as a matter of fact popular. This can be accounted for by the fact that the popularity of certain Indian actors lends popularity to his product. Nothing which actor so and so does can be bad, hence there is a popularity based upon biased foundations. Again the Indian film, depicting Indian life, has an attraction of its own. The Cinema-goer can so readily understand, in spite of his inability to read titles, those phases of life with which he is so familiar and with which his own life is perhaps so closely knit. He experiences the joy of having understood the meaning of the story. All else is of little or no consequence to him. He rarely cares to see behind the story, and takes for granted that the acting is what it should be. It is natural therefore that this kind is popular only with the illiterate and if we go by the opinion of the communities, they do not find favour with the Parsis or the Anglo-Indians.

(c) As to whether it is more profitable to show an Indian than a Western film, I am afraid the question proceeds upon a pre-supposition that it is at all events profitable as a matter of fact to show Indian films. I am aware of studios and cinemas having been closed or dragging on a precarious existence. I can only say that as the profitability or otherwise of a release would depend upon several varying factors, none of which can be determined with any precision or approximately, it is not possible to make an assertion that Indian or Western films would pay more to the exhibitors. The high cost of production of a particular Western film would not itself mean that it would be unprofitable to show it. For instance comedy dramas in which Harold Lloyd figures always attract bumper houses even though the charges are put up 50 per cent. higher than the usual charges at the same theatre. The cost of production of such film is high (Harold Lloyd being paid about Rs. 10,000 per day) and it is not less profitable to show his films. An Indian film may have cost little, but that little may have to be written off as a dead loss. Again the excellence of a film does not necessarily go hand in hand with the cost of its production, nor does it necessarily mean greater popularity of the film. However, it may be stated generally that showing Indian films would be more profitable if the industry were established on a surer, sounder and more highly organised basis.

Amongst a few successful films I would mention, "Lanka Dhum," "Krishna Janma," "Aladin," "Gulbakavi," "The Magician of Bengal," "Sacrifice," "At the Clang of Fetters" and "Laila Majnoon."

6. Films of Indian life, topical news and scenes with Indian actors depicting stories from the national literature history and mythology would no doubt, as a rule be popular with Indian audience; though I think it would take a pretty long time before the prevalent Western films would be threatened with serious competition on this score. It is but natural that the national literature, history and mythology would more strongly appeal as they would be better able to understand it. An episode of King Arthur and his Round Table would not find as much favour with an Indian audience of the average and, I may add, illiterate type as would the story of King Dasratha.

(b) (1) I am afraid that my above remarks are confined to the illiterate class which forms the bulk in India. To the educated section of the Indians, I doubt very much if any such film would appeal more than Western productions. The educated cinema-goer readily understands English literature and history and can follow the event on the screen very well. In fact he is more saturated with English literature and history than, unfortunately, his own national literature and history. Ever since the beginning of his secondary education he gradually loses all contact with his own literature so much so that he can better understand a Western film centering round the French Revolution or Cardinal Richelieu than he can some of the Indian episodes. It is but evident that no particular type depicting either national literature or history or mythology would appeal to him. Again he has learnt to appreciate Western art of acting which has won admittedly universal praise. The standard of excellence in the art to which he becomes accustomed enables him to detect more quickly the shortcomings of Indian productions. I am afraid before Indian films depicting Indian history and mythology can become more acceptable to the educated audience than Western ones, a marked change would have to be undergone, a sweeping change in the acting, as well as in the hundred and one departments through which a film has to pass before being finally released. In fact, to be frank, Indian productions will not achieve that standard of popularity with the educated classes until our cinematograph industry approaches the standard of American excellence.

(b) (2) But with the illiterate audiences such films will find favour. Especially films portraying events in Indian history are already much appreciated. Again I have reason to believe that if instructive films are produced showing the best way of doing things—for instance in agriculture—they may prove popular with them.

7. So far as I am aware I do not know of any special efforts having ever been made to obtain films suitable for exhibition to British and Indian troops. There having been no demand for such a type it is difficult to say if any difficulty is experienced in obtaining them. In fact no exhibitor ever thinks of the suitability or otherwise of a film from the point of view of the troops. In Bombay, no doubt, the British troops take to the cinema in a sufficiently large numbers, but in no case in such proportions as to warrant a special treatment at the hands of the exhibitors or producers. As to what sort of films are both suitable and popular with the troops, I may say that though not specially catered for, films of military enterprises, or war stories would be generally suitable and popular with this class.

8. To say that one is satisfied with the present condition of the cinematograph industry in this country would be to show one's ignorance of the plight it is in. It is hampered in all the branches of production, distribution and exhibition. In all branches—and especially in production—much that is desirable remains to be done. Far from being satisfied with it one simply pities the infantile struggles of the industry for its existence. The productions being limited the problem of distribution is not so acute with indigenous productions. So far as exhibition is concerned those concerned in the industry seems to think it is no problem. No doubt care is taken in some cases, but otherwise whatever comes to hand is exhibited.



(b) There are many difficulties in the way of the industry: the chief amongst these being (1) absence of technical education, (2) limited economic resources at the disposal of producers, (3) paucity of good actors, story-writers, etc., (4) absence of State-aid, (5) absence of protective measures, (6) apprehension of religious feelings and susceptibilities being wounded, (7) injustice of tariff, (8) competition of foreign productions, (9) general economic poverty of the audience, (10) absence of minute sub-divisions of technical work, (11) language difficulties, and last but not the least (12) the Entertainment Tax.

So far as absence of technical education is concerned in India we have not as yet learnt to regard the "movies" as a regular profession, just as we regard law and medicine. Excepting for a few producers and capitalists who have stakes in the industry everybody seems to regard it as a side line. The actors seem to think that their training on the stage is more than sufficient to fit them for screen-acting. In fact no efforts are made to train persons systematically for this trade. The industry suffers much from the lack of training, which occasionally brings into prominence the inferiority of Indian films. If there is a lack of vocational education on the part of the screen-actor, the director, the cameraman, the scenario-writer, the editor, the printer—all stand badly in need of technical training. The remedy that I would suggest is to send out a batch of Indian youths to foreign countries,—notably America, England and Germany—to learn the various trades. It is a matter of expenditure and slow progress but I do not know of any other get-efficient-quick method. We have much to learn from Western art, (of course eliminating what is not worth learning), and in these days of specialisation, if the Indian cinema industry is going to hold its own against foreign competition, we should see that those responsible for production are highly specialised in their several trades.

I also consider as an obstacle the limited economic resources of the producers. In America productions cost million dollars a piece. In India this would not be possible perhaps for a century more to come! Capital is shy in India in flowing to an industry which is not well-established. The capitalist runs the greatest risk of losing all that he has staked if the film falls flat on the public. Due to their limited resources the producers have to put up with second-rate actors and assistants. Those costly finishing touches and details which go to make a film great, and the absence of which proves fatal, are often omitted. This economy often proves costly. Advance of capital at a low rate of interest would probably aid the industry. But in the days when the Provincial Government have not a pie to spare for primary education, it is no use prescribing this remedy. To achieve the same end I would recommend the co-operation, rather if it were possible amalgamation, of several producers. At present there are six studios and thirteen exhibiting firms in the field. If all of them united their resources on terms and conditions to be decided upon between them, there is no reason why this difficulty should not disappear or at least be overcome to some extent. Subsidising this industry would be a welcome measure also.

I have stated before that absence of technical education is a hinderance to this industry. Closely allied to it is the absence of good screen-actors and story-writers. So far as acting is concerned the actors are apparently in blissful ignorance of the difference between screen and stage acting. Good stage actors are not necessarily good screen actors. The work of the former is easy as he can make use of words to express himself. On screen silence is the language. A haggard face or a quiver of lips alone should tell the whole tale to the audience. Again there is no attraction for Indian youths and girls of respectable families so far as Indian "movies" are concerned. Most of our screen actresses are actresses by day and public women by night, whether the income from acting is generally supplemented by that from prostitution or acting is regarded as a side line by prostitutes. If youths of respectable families offered to act, they would have to act more often than not with the prostitutes, which in a conservative country like India would not be tolerated. Thus is shut out the flow of really good made talent. Again

for years to come conservative India will not permit her respectable daughters—perhaps not wrongly—to be associated with an industry which has an odium of its own. It is perhaps unfortunate for India that our Indian cinematograph industry should have been associated, perhaps not inextricably, with public women or with women of questionable character. To ensure a regular supply of good actors and actresses, public women should be prohibited from the taking part in the production of films. Unless the odium now attached to the industry is removed, I am afraid no supply of good actors would be forthcoming. Again, if I may be frank, good acting would proceed only from a person leading a sober life and surely the features of our actresses with the outlines of their profession writ large on their face do not add to the charms of their none too brilliant performances. If we have neglected acting we have neglected story-writing as well. Absence of good story-writers is another difficulty. Often the stories for a production have been got up in a day or two. Here again we should remember that play writing and writing for screen are two very different matters. The supply of story-writers of course would depend upon born intelligence, but I see no reason why technical education in this should not register a distinct improvement.

The fourth difficulty as I have stated is absence of State-aid to the industry. While there should not be wanton interference by the State, the State should help the industry in all possible ways. For instance the United States of America in one case permitted the use of its navy for producing a comic film. Similarly Provincial and Central Government should afford facilities. If State-aid were forthcoming in the shape of subsidies nothing would be more welcome.

Again the absence of protective measures which I have discussed in a later portion of my evidence is a stumbling-block to the Industry.

Another difficulty which I have stated, *viz.*, apprehension of wounding religious feelings and susceptibilities of one community by another is peculiar to India. Certain sections of certain communities are ultra-sensitive and would take insult where none is intended to be conveyed. The producers have to be on guard against this, as any slip in this would mean offending a whole community. This difficulty is peculiar to India and at times restricts the freedom of the producers largely. I cannot suggest any remedy for this. So long as India is what it is, the best way to overcome the difficulty is to avoid courting it consciously and unconsciously.

Injustice of tariff and competition of foreign films are difficulties about which I shall speak later on in connection with other questions. The general economic poverty of the audience reflecting upon the industry does not require comment at length; suffice it to say that the prosperity of the industry is intimately connected with the well-being of the audience. Cinema-going is after all a matter of recreation and usually forms the last item of any domestic budget. If the masses in India find it difficult to get the barest necessities of life, the cinema to them is a luxury only. Hence the economic difficulties of the audience are to be considered as part of the exhibitors' own difficulties.

Again peculiar to India is the difficulty of languages. We have as yet no established *lingua franca* of our own. Some idea can be had of this difficulty from the fact that there are in India no less than 119 written languages. Some put the number still higher. Usually in three languages the titles are expressed. So far as the Entertainment Tax is concerned I shall speak at some length later on.

9. I am afraid good films are not readily available at reasonable prices, the main reason for it being that in India the number of productions is very limited. Even difficulty is experienced in getting good foreign productions. Some which are really good are very rarely available. In such cases usually the price of admission to the picture house is enhanced by 50 per cent.

So far as Indian productions are concerned, there is nothing like conscious monopoly. In fact one or two prominent producers may dictate their terms. Again certain houses exhibit films of a particular make but this is more a case of sole agency than monopoly.

10. The system of "block" and "blind booking" and of "first run" or "key theatres" is in existence in Bombay. Under the "block" system a contract for the year is entered into by the exhibitor with the producer, under which the former exhibits all the productions of the latter. In "blind booking" the exhibitor is denied the right of "choose and pick" films. If the exhibitor wants films A and B he would have to take up C and D as well. Thus the advantage under the first system would be that the producer would be saved the trouble of finding a market for his commodity while the exhibitor would be saved the trouble of search. The Industry may find it convenient to adopt this system but it is injurious to the public. It would encourage second-rate production and there would be no stimulus for producing better ones. The same disadvantages would result under the second system.

Certain picture-houses in Bombay make it a point to run only new pictures. To these picture-houses motusil picture-houses turn for supply.

11. I should think the exhibitors in this country have facilities for pre-viewing films, though this would be out of question in cases for foreign productions exhibited by Indian exhibitors.

12. In my opinion the Amusement Tax is a great hinderance to the development of the Indian Cinematograph Industry. It is levied at the rate of 2 annas in the rupee in Bombay on all admission tickets above the value of 4 annas. This tax falls, where it is not borne by the exhibitors, almost entirely upon the middle class. The poor class is exempted from it and the rich do not feel it. But a considerable portion of the receipts of the exhibitor consists of the monies realised from the middle classes. I have already stated before that one of the difficulties of the exhibitor is the poverty of his audience. The Entertainment Tax adds to the burden. I understand that it has fetched annually a sum amounting to nearly 16 lakhs from 1923 when it was first levied till 1927. I apprehend that, apart from its uneven incidence, it is inexpedient to levy such a tax. In cases of some exhibitors it is apparently collected from the audience, in other cases apparently paid by the exhibitor. Whatever may be the real ultimate incidence I emphatically oppose the imposition of such a levy on the cinema, as I regard it as an educative agency. I shall dwell at an appropriate place upon the useful work that cinemas perform as an agency for reforms, for spread of education and information. For the present I shall rest content with pointing out that it is unwise to tax an agency of great good and a means of spreading the light of knowledge where now ignorance prevails. I am aware that the proceeds of this tax are utilised for educational and charitable purposes. It is strange statesmanship that deprives one type of educational agency of funds to provide another kind. If the "tax-ridden" exhibitor is to breathe more freely, if the audience with a none too plethoric purse is to suffer a little less for his attempt to derive amusement with instruction, there is no doubt that the Entertainment Tax must go. The Entertainment Tax is an anomaly. Our Provincial Governments spend monies for the upkeep of parks and resorts of recreation and it passes my understanding what grave sin this resort of recreation has committed that it is so penalised. We do not tax people for moving in open parks, maidans and other places of recreation and deriving physical well-being from them; then why should we penalise him who seeks mental recreation? Again taking into consideration the productive capacity of the tax I am very doubtful whether it would be worth a Government's while to irritate the public for so paltry a gain. However I am not unaware of the needs for funds in which the Governments, both Central and Provincial, now stand. Hence in order to make up this defect I would recommend an enhancement of taxation on the Turf proceeds. If the Government cannot do without this tax let them penalise legalised gambling. The public sentiment is against the existence of a race course. Therefore let an innocent means of recreation be untroubled with taxation and let that institution which lacks moral popular support, furnish the deficit. It is to be remembered that this Entertainment Tax might be ultimately shifted to the indigenous producer. If audience falls off—and it must if invulnerable economic principle of increasing price and decreasing demands have any meaning—the exhibitor would be

unable to pay the producer's price. He in his turn would have to close the studio and the industry would generally suffer. The Indian cinematograph industry is yet in its infancy and is unable to bear any burden. In my opinion the Entertainment Tax is uneconomic in production, unjust in its incidence, inexpedient in its imposition and inconsistent in its principle and hence it simply must go.

13. The present customs duty imposed upon the imported films acts arbitrarily and is a source of injustice both to the exhibitor and producer in India, in the former case exhibitors of foreign and indigenous productions. The duty is levied as follows. A custom value is estimated of the imported films at 4 annas per foot, and 15 per cent. of this is levied as duty. Thus on the import of one reel of 1,000 feet the customs valuation would be Rs. 250 and 15 per cent. of it would be Rs. 37-8. This duty is trivial as compared with other costs of production of a film. It is arbitrary in this way that an importer of an used film would have to pay the same duty as the importer of a new one. Evidently the earning capacity, and hence the value, of the new one is higher. Therefore on the latter the tax would work out at a very low percentage. In the former case, though not serious, it would constitute some handicap. I do not think that an American or any other foreign producer suffers any harm from it. At the same time I cannot state that the duty is protective in its character. And not being protective in its character it is not at all useful for promoting the indigenous production of films. However I would strongly object to any enhancement of the rate of existing duty, though I know the indigenous industry will derive some benefit by a protective tariff wall. My reason for maintaining status quo in this respect is two fold. Foreign films are also an agency of spreading knowledge and information and hence as education agencies they should not be taxed. This is in the fitness of things as all statesmen are desirous of raising the educational level of their country. Again even if you rear up a tariff wall, foreign production are sure to surmount however high your tariff walls may be, and enter India. I am not prepared to pronounce whether the incidence of such abnormal duty would be shifted on to the audience or borne by the exhibitor. But this much is certain, that the foreign producer will not be affected thereby and an Indian audience would be penalised without Indian industry benefiting. People are sure to pay a higher price for witnessing the release of foreign productions. Instead of the enhancement by 50 per cent. of the admission charges they would have to pay double. It would deprive hundreds of thousands the joy of witnessing the excellent acting of American actors and actresses in which they have achieved singular perfection. I am therefore opposed to the raising of the tariff wall in this case, though I am committed to a policy of Protection generally so far as India is concerned. I think the Indian cinematograph industry should first substantiate its claims before Tariff Board if it desires protection through the erection of tariff barriers as its claims would have to be judged with regard to the claims of other industries as well.

However there cannot be any doubt that if the tariff generally on all materials connected with the film industry were removed it would help the industry. But here we have to take into consideration the fact that the control of provincial revenues should not suffer. Under the circumstances I would recommend an abolition of import duties on such raw materials as do not fetch much by way of revenue and would recommend a slight reduction in others. This should be done taking into consideration what are the main or, if I may so call them, "staple" materials connected with the industry.

14. I am of opinion that an increased use of the cinema for educational purposes in school and for adult education in Agriculture, Public Health, etc., would give a fillip to this industry. But we should distinguish two points, *viz.*, use of the cinema for this purpose with a view to encourage the industry and the use of the cinema to encourage the spread of education itself. In one case the use would be a means to an end and in the latter case an end in itself. For the former purpose merely doing this much will not suffice. If Government or other agency used films for educational purposes, I do not think with the present state of their finance they would be able to increase production

to such an extent as to enable the industry to derive substantial advantage therefrom. In other words I would want films to be used for educational purposes primarily and if the industry got any advantage I would consider it as incidental.

So far as demand for such types of films is concerned, I may say that though there is no actual demand, a demand for the same can be created. In other words I would say a potential demand exists. I am aware of some films in existence which have these aims. I may add here that the two film stories which I wrote, viz., "Slaves of Custom" and "The Curse of Ignorance," had primarily educational purposes in view, and from the criticism of these I should say films of similar nature if produced would be appreciated.

15. Though I am aware that a popular belief prevails amongst Indians that India is eminently fitted for the favourable development of an Indian film-producing industry, my own opinion is that it is *not* so. It is true that India possesses some of the most beautiful natural sceneries including landscapes, waterfalls, towering mountains, mountain-gorges, etc., which foreign producers have to erect at enormous costs. But these natural scenes are not everything in the production of films and other conditions equally necessary are missing. Amongst other matters I may mention the shyness of Indian capital—perhaps not unreasonably shy, looking to the fact that a successful film only gives a return of 10 to 15 per cent.—in diverting capital to an industry to which social stigma has rightly or wrongly attached. Again I am afraid enterprise is needed. There is a dearth of good actors, scenario-writers, etc. The Indian youth is reluctant to look up to the Cinematograph Industry for a career, while nothing short of domestic calamity would compel a girl to resort to it. In addition to this several of the difficulties which I have referred to in my answer to question 12 stand in the way.

16. I am afraid, there is a paucity of Indian producers, directors, actors, actresses and scenario-writers. In fact any man who has sufficient hardihood thinks he could act in any of these roles by turns if occasion arose. I may say, without intending to convey any reflection upon any person connected with the industry, that the country cannot depend upon them for a substantial output of films of real competitive exhibition value.

Whatever method be adopted to remedy this deficiencies I am afraid the progress will of necessity be slow. I would recommend specialisation in each department by our young men who should be given special training in America, England and Germany and then these should be appointed tutors to other young men and women here.

17. I do not think that sufficient capital is already put in this industry and, to be frank, I have not the least doubt that the cinema industry is the last industry in the country to which sufficient Indian capital would flow. A social stigma is attached to it; the returns on the capital are absolutely uncertain and the returns in the case of successful films also are not on the whole adequate or sufficient to induce Indian capitalists to take the risk.

18. I should say that if legislative measures of a suitable character are taken, private enterprise of film production would receive encouragement. Amongst such measures I would recommend (1) abolition of the Entertainment Tax, (2) reduction of import duty on raw materials used in connection with film productions, (3) subsidy by Government, (4) facilities should be given by Government by lending their troops, artillery, ships, etc., for "shooting" scenes, (5) transportation facilities and legislating that at least one reel of Indian produced films should be screened at all shows.

19. It is really amusing to compare the cost of production of films in the country with that in other countries. Here a film costs anything between Rs. 20,000 to Rs. 50,000. In America we know of million dollar productions. These again are by no means rare. In India an actor is paid anything between Rs. 30 and Rs. 1,000 a month. In America Harold Lloyd earns about £208,000 per annum. Charlie Chaplin is paid about £156,000 (and a share in profits). The salaries of other famous actors and actresses range above £36,000 per annum. Thus we may say there is no basis for comparison. In

fact in the present economic plight of India we may rest assured that it would take two or three centuries to approach the magnitude in costs of production (though not necessarily in excellence) of American films. What is true of the costs of American productions is equally true, though in a lesser degree, of England and Germany.

20. (a) In answer to question 12 I have suggested the removal of the Entertainment Tax, but I also have shown from where the loss in revenue is to be met with. In answer to question 13 I have suggested a reduction of duty and I do not think that the same will entail such loss of revenue as cannot be accommodated in a fluctuating budget. I have also spoken of subsidising the industry and to obtain the necessary funds I would once again turn to the Turf. I am equally aware of other crying needs of the country. Our nation-building departments are starving for want of funds yet I would maintain that the indigenous cinematograph industry of this country should be nourished provided it is made a real means of providing amusement and instruction.

(b) Though in the above case I have indicated specific sources from where to meet with the necessary expenditure, I think the trend of opinion so far as public finance is concerned is against "ear-marking" a particular source for a specific purpose.

21. I cannot agree to any proposal that a State agency should be created to undertake the management of the film industry either to ensure the production and exhibition of films conforming to moral standard or to provide a centralised neutral distributing agency and furnish a fair market or to inaugurate the use of teaching and propaganda films as I do not believe any State monopoly in this direction will be in the best interest of the film industry. It is to be remembered that a State at best is an upcountry agency to carry on successfully any purpose in which artistic requirements are prominent and that the redtapism would prove an enormous bar to the successful production of artistic films. I am afraid that with all its disadvantages private initiative alone can score success in the field for the official would not move with the same pace and courage which an individual owner can be expected to have where he is responsible to none. I am afraid, in trying to ensure production and exhibition of films conforming to particular moral standards, we may lower the quality of all the films so that they would be received coldly by the public. From the beginning to the end the functionaries on behalf of the State would be concerned much about the moral standard and forget that the primary purpose of the films is to amuse and entertain. So far a centralised neutral distributing agency is concerned, though a State can do much I am afraid we would have to put up with that much disadvantage in order to avoid greater ones arising out of a State monopoly. State control can only succeed in such cases where a routine of practice is to be observed and where a machinery-like arrangement is to be carried out. Thus State control may work with a degree of success in railways but in an enterprise like film production where repetition is fatal and originality is needed at every turn State control would be more a clog than a help. Again I would consider State monopoly in this matter as an encroachment upon the right of the individual to carry on a trade of his liking. These remarks would be equally applicable to any proposal of establishment of a State censorship. In my opinion censorship by State would unnecessarily restrict the freedom of the producer and perhaps in less scrupulous hands may be used as a means to propagate political views by curbing those of their opponents. On these grounds I cannot agree to any such proposal.

#### *Films of British Commonwealth.*

22. With regard to India participating in the policy outlined in the Resolution of the Imperial Conference with a view to give some measure of encouragement to British Empire films I must emphatically maintain that, both in the interest of the development of her own industry and for the preservation of Indian market to herself, no preference ought to be given to any films

produced in any part of the Empire. I am strongly against mixing up business with sentiment and would not consent to any arrangement which even any individual part of the Empire may be desirous of coming to with India. This view I hold because I find that any preference given to the British Empire would enable the productions from there to enter into direct competition with indigenous productions. Secondly I do not see under what special disadvantage British productions are labouring that such favourable treatment is sought to be given to them. I am against giving these films any special treatment as I am against subjecting them to special handicaps. Already the British films have got a foothold in the Indian market and they should stand or fall on their merits in competition with American productions. Whatever the motives with which Imperial preference is thus sought to be ushered in through a side-door, I cannot help saying that the result would be ousting of American productions from the market which would leave a clean field for British products. Again there is an apprehension of retaliation by America which would be incensed at thus being ousted by her rival and competitor.

(a), (b) and (c) I do not think any such participation would assist the development of her own film industry or assist in making India better known and understood throughout the Empire and the world or at all in any way improve the standard of Western films shown in India.

23. I am very sanguine of the capacity of the Movies for making known conditions, resources and habits of the people and the activities of the various Governments of the British commonwealth of nations. Already we find that the Pathe Gazette of a length of about 650 feet released by Messrs. Madan Theatres Limited, gives us news in picture form not only of the Empire but the whole world. Thus these one reel films would be very convenient in conveying on the screen to different parts of the Empire events of interest and importance which may have occurred in some other. Again engineering projects or other similar enterprises can be shown to other parts of the Empire in order to induce investment in public works abroad. The mode of life, the habits and conditions of the various peoples can be very well shown by exhibiting scenes of public streets of particular towns and cities. Again an idea can be given to one part of the Empire of the resources, both mineral and agricultural, which remain undeveloped and unexplored in the other. As in this case nothing original has to be introduced into the reel it can safely be left to Government control, supervision and direction.

(b) To this end various Governments may co-operate by contributing to the establishment of a concern which should have at its command all the facilities of a private studio. This institution should have a convenient head-quarter and from there send out parties of men to photograph either incidents, occurrences, projects, enterprises and the like which may at once serve the purpose of instruction and information. The information bureaus of different parts of the Empire should be asked to keep this institution supplied with information in such matters which they would find would prove of general interest. Thus, for instance, if the Government of one part of the Empire desires its people to colonise a particular district nothing could be a better means of inducing the people to emigrate there than the views and sceneries of that district released on the screen.

## PART II.

### *Social aspects and control.*

24. (a) I am of opinion that certain films ought not to have been permitted to be exhibited in this country as they undoubtedly have a demoralising and otherwise injurious effect upon the public. It is as much the duty of the State to guard public morals as it is its duty to guard public health. No questions of encroachment upon individual right ought to be permitted to interfere with the work of the State in this direction.

(b) I do not think there is a general circulation of immoral or criminally suggestive films but occasionally a film here and there manages ingeniously to evade the none too strict scrutiny of the Censors and is exhibited with very pernicious consequences to the society. These are two types of films that are specially harmful.

(c) These are films depicting riotous scenes or films centering round the commission of some crimes. The former have a bad effect upon the rising generation while the latter suggests criminal tendencies to healthy and robust bodied unemployed persons to whom it comes as an additional temptation in the way. It is really difficult to say in what way these are harmful but this much is certain, that they produce upon the minds of these two classes of persons an effect which, unfortunately, lasts permanently.

(d) (1) I frankly believe that in cases of "sex" films the censorship is inadequate as I have seen two or three sensational films exhibited in picture-houses of Bombay which, in the best interests of Indian society, should not have been released. One of these attempted to depict the present society in America, in its startling and unabashed nakedness. It gave an absolutely wrong idea of life led in the New World. So far as sex films are concerned, we would have to tighten the grip of censorship upon them if our morals in India are to be maintained at a high standard.

(d) (2) So far as crime films are concerned, I am of opinion that many productions now released should have better been kept away from India. I find that at times suggestions are directly adopted from the screen and these are reflected in the nature of the crimes committed in our Presidency. I should think that any film having any criminally suggestive tendency should be made to pass through an ordeal by a very strict Board of Censors.

(e) I think that though there has not been any increase of crimes in the Presidency generally, there is no doubt that several of these can be traced to the cinema because we find in them a marked resemblance so far as methods of commission are concerned. Occasionally instances are reported in the paper in which the offender has clearly received his instructions from the picture.

(f) I know of two or three instances in which the criminals have resorted to devices commonly exhibited as having been used by villains in the pictures. In one case a servant had his hands tied to a chair in collusion with a burglar, who then burgled the house, so as to convey to his master an impression that he was himself an innocent victim of the criminals. In yet another case masks had been used by dacoits to conceal their identity. In still another case a person managed to manufacture a key from an impression which he learnt to take on soap of the original key, as was done in a crime story. It is rather often that we hear of motor cars being used for the purposes of committing offences of dacoity, kidnapping, and murder.

25. I feel that the differences in social custom and outlook on life between East and West make it necessary that special consideration should prevail in the censorship of films in this country. What is a matter of common occurrence in the West may be resented as indignity and insult in India. The average Indian woman is far too shy and modest and would think her modesty insulted if the loose types of productions were, without strict censorship, released in all their license before an audience composed of Indian women. Again there is a great deal in the customs of the West that is undesirable for Indians and should be kept out of India as long as it can be. For instance flirting may be a very common thing in French cities but it is undesirable that this looseness in life should be exhibited to Indian women more accustomed to a reserve.

26. In India we run a great risk of offending religious susceptibilities of one community or the other for the simple reason that widely divergent religious ideas are prevalent in different communities. A stricter censorship is desirable not because any Indian producer maliciously desires to outrage the religious feelings of others but through oversight, neglect or ignorance on the part of the producer he may incorporate in his production certain incidents



which may irritate other communities. Looking to the present communal tension in India the importance of this question cannot be exaggerated.

(b) I cannot recollect any example of a film offending the religious susceptibilities of a community but I have a vague recollection that at least in one case where the Mohamedan community felt aggrieved at certain portions of a film released at a local cinema being objectionable, the same was brought to the notice of the exhibitor and immediately the error was rectified.

27. (a) I am of opinion that those films which attempt to portray Western civilisation and in doing so lay open to Indian gaze such ugly aspects of social life in the West as would perhaps exist in every society, have a tendency to lower Western civilisation in the eyes of Indians. The average uneducated Indian to whom such class of films is generally unintelligible thinks that what he is shown is a phase of normal Western life. The worst part of it is that he tries to imitate the example of his Western confrere and very naturally questions himself that if the latter enjoys so much freedom and license why should he not be entitled to it in the same measure in his own country. He fails to realise that the particular phase of life exhibited to him is perhaps exaggerated and therefore hardly typical of the normal life. If films of this type are excluded by rigorous censorship I think the evils arising out of it would be mitigated if not removed.

(b) I am not aware of any film exhibited abroad having a special tendency to misrepresent Indian civilisation. I have noticed that on some rare occasion a plot is interwoven around an Indian in which he is given a shady character. I think this is not due to any deliberate intention on the part of the producer to misrepresent Indian civilisation but somehow or other in West the Indian is looked upon as an item of curiosity and mystery and hence a mysterious role is considered by the Western producer as best suited for a character representing an Indian. I do not know of any Indian production being guilty of any such misrepresentation.

28. (a) I am of opinion that films showing love affairs, especially illicit, should not be exhibited to children as well as adolescents. Such films are not an uncommon feature of a cinema programme in India.

(b) The same type is peculiarly dangerous to adolescents in as much as in their case there is that additional danger of their being misguided or there being unnecessarily excited.

29. I am in favour of certification of films as "For Adults Only." But I believe that such restriction should be placed as rarely as possible and only in cases of absolute necessity. At times the difficulty arises in distinguishing adolescents from adults and the idle curiosity of the former is greatly sharpened by his being excluded from witnessing a production. His mind therefore becomes specially tuned to receive impressions and whatever impressions he receives are, in such cases, generally of a permanent character. Rather than resort to such certification perhaps it may be more advantageous to society to ban the production altogether.

30. I am not in favour of prohibiting children of any age from visiting cinemas as usually it is a source of innocent amusement to the little ones. On the contrary I should think that the children should be taught as much through the eyes as through the ears and the cinema should play no inconsiderable part in their education. Of course with a duly constituted censorship most of the danger can be easily guarded against and thus the cinema may be deprived of its power to do harm and be retained solely as an agency for good.

31. I am of opinion that censorship is not only an effective method of guarding against the misuse of the film but is the only method which will deprive the screen of its tendency to do harm while retaining all the advantages of instruction which it undoubtedly possesses. But a censorship to be effective should be properly constituted so that, while it may eliminate all that is undesirable, it may not unnecessarily interfere with the recreation.

32. I am not satisfied either with the constitution of the Board of Censors in the Bombay Presidency or with its work. I think the Board is too small

and not of a representative character while the method of entrusting the task of examining films through an inspector is certainly unsatisfactory. It amounts to the virtual transfer of a discretion that is supposed to have been rested in the Board to an individual. Only in cases where the inspector is doubtful as to the suitability of the film for Indian audiences that the assistance of the Board is requisitioned. I would therefore recommend that the membership of the Board should be extended to twenty to represent various interests as well as the Cinematograph industry itself and that at least two members in turn should take upon themselves the task of examining productions themselves.

33. (a) I do not think that a strict Censorship would reasonably interfere with the recreations of the people. It is not necessary that films should pander to the vices of a person in order to prove recreative. Recreation and strict censorship can go hand in hand. True recreation will always be derived from purity of thought and laxity in exhibition is not a necessary factor for it.

(b) Perhaps a very strict censorship may result in a falling off in attendance at cinemas because if all little details, such as kisses and embraces, are rigorously excluded in a Puritanic manner the film may be deprived of much of its pep. But I do not think that a discriminating censorship would result in a falling off in attendance; on the contrary even orthodox parents would be induced to permit their children to visit them if once they are assured of the purity and cleanliness of our exhibits.

(c) Nor do I think a strict censorship will interfere with freedom required for artistic and inspirational development, because art and inspiration do not require license, hidden under the name of freedom, for their origin or existence.

34. I am not in favour of a single Central Board replacing Provincial Boards as such a body will be too unwieldy and incapable of looking after the diverse requirements of the provinces.

(b) Nor do I advocate a Central Board in addition to Provincial Boards as that would be an unnecessary duplication of proceedings from which no real advantage will accrue to the country and greater impediment would be placed in the way of producers and exhibitors.

35. I have already said that the constitution of the Provincial Board is not satisfactory. I would have at least twenty members on it with a majority of non-officials.

(b) I am not in favour of a whole-time experienced paid officer as Censor to be assisted by a Advisory Board of non-officials.

36. (a) I have already stated that the transfer of this discriminatory power, to an inspector is not desirable. In all these cases at least two members should examine the film by turn and the producers and exhibitors should be represented on the same. Amongst qualifications necessary for an inspector I would mention that he should be a man of worldly experience, of unimpeachable character, in whom the public can repose confidence and, if possible, a man of literary and artistic accomplishments.

(b) I do not think that all films can be examined by all the members of the Board but surely if the Board is enlarged and the duty taken in turns this could be possible. I think that suitable persons who would be prepared to devote sufficient time to the examination of films would be available not only for a reasonable remuneration but without any remuneration whatever, if an appeal is made to gentlemen at large to take up this work in the interest of the society.

37. (a) I am of opinion that there are reasonable safeguards under the Act to prevent the exhibition of a film which may be objectionable locally although it has been passed by a Board elsewhere. In case the production is objectionable because its character is offensive to religion then it can be dealt with even under the newly incorporated section of the Indian Penal Code making it penal to wound intentionally the religious feelings of others.

(b) I am however of opinion that a Board Certificate should be made available for a particular province only so that it may be inoperative in other provinces. This would give a better chance to the Provincial Boards to judge a film from the point of view of their Province.

38. I am aware that about a dozen productions which had been passed by a Board of Censors in one province had been found objectionable in another province. I may mention that my film, "Handsome Blackguard" which ran for three weeks in Bombay, was banned in Delhi because it contained an incident showing a Mahomedan shooting, which it was feared would lead to some sort of disquiet.

39. I have not come across any picture disapproved of in the country of origin or in Great Britain being exhibited in India.

40. I do not think that posters, handbills and advertisements of cinema performances should also be censored for the simple reason that they contain nothing indecent or objectionable or undesirable from the point of view of public policy. I am against any interference in matters where none is called for.

41. Far from noticing any improvement in the moral standard of the films exhibited in India in recent years I find a gradual relaxation of the same. Formerly our pictures used to be more respectful than what they are now. Perhaps this is due to the change which the World War has brought about in the social outlook of the Westerner.

42. Somehow or other, and perhaps not unnaturally, the Cinematograph trade and the Censor are at loggerheads. I would recommend that two representatives of the Cinema trade to be elected as the trade thinks fit, should have seats on the Board of Censors. A further Board of Appeal should be constituted to hear complaints of persons grieved at the decision of the Board of Censors. This would give an opportunity to the trade to ventilate their legitimate grievances and remove much of the misunderstanding that makes for the absence of co-operation between the two.

43. In my opinion there is no need for the import and export of films as the same purpose can be served by a strict but discriminate censorship.

44. Public bodies and the Press could if they would assist in maintaining a good standard of films but I am of opinion that especially the latter should not unnecessarily interfere in the trade of the film producer. The press should not assume the province of determining the merits or demerits of a production or its suitability or otherwise for exhibition. Maintenance of a good standard is a matter for the producers to achieve in their own interest. Maintenance of a moral standard of films is a matter for a Board of Censors and not of the press. Of course public bodies may criticise the activities of the Board of Censors now and then but otherwise neither they nor the press should step in freely to dictate to the producers and exhibitors what is best from them to do.

45. (a) If a certain extent of Government control is exercised over film production it would result in benefit to the society. This control should be limited to the Government seeing that the productions do not fall below a prescribed level of moral standard. Secondly the Government should see that no productions offend or insult the religious susceptibilities of one community or the other, directly or indirectly. This control should be exercised through the Board of Censors. However this should not degenerate into a rigorous inquisition by the Government.

(b) It is desirable that all film producing agencies should be registered and licensed and their studios periodically inspected. This would enable the Government to know exactly the true state of affairs of the industry, and to place it before the public. At the same time it would enable the Government, if they have the desire to assist this industry in one way or the other. However only a small fee should be charged at the time of registration and issue of license. Licenses should be issued periodically and only after proper inspection. Inspection should not be permitted to interfere with the working of the studio.

**Oral Evidence of Mr. P. J. MARZBAN, M.A., J.P., M.L.C., Editor of the "Jam-e-Jamshed," on Thursday, the 17th November 1927.**

*Chairman:* You have great experience of the Bombay city?

A. I have been editing the "Jam-e-Jamshed" paper for the last 25 years.

Q. I suppose you yourself frequently go to cinemas? Do you see both Indian and western films? Which do you see mostly?

A. I see mostly western films.

Q. Have you ever been to Laxmi or Venus Theatre?

A. I think I have been to Laxmi Theatre only once and I have a hazy recollection of it.

Q. Which are the theatres that you most favour?

A. As a matter of fact, I do not go there to see pictures for sake of amusement. As I said in my statement, I go there to see which films would be appreciated by the public better before they are screened.

Q. I suppose you believe there is a bright future for the film industry in this country?

A. As matters stand at present, I do not think a very good future is in prospect, unless something unusual crops up in the way of legislation.

Q. You think that the present conditions are somewhat disappointing for Indian production?

A. Yes.

Q. I suppose you think that it is an industry which should be encouraged?

A. Yes.

Q. And left to itself you think it will not develop?

A. I don't think it will be able to make any headway if it is left to itself.

Q. You think some measures are needed, administrative and legislative, to place the industry on a proper footing?

A. Yes.

Q. And you have given us a list of those measures?

A. Yes.

Q. Now coming to the question of duties, you do not advocate an increase of duty on foreign films?

A. No.

Q. Why not?

A. I don't think that an increased duty levied on foreign films will serve any purpose. People will pay more to see a foreign picture, whether a high duty or a low duty is levied. If a foreign picture is good, people will pay even double the price to see it. So I don't think it would be advisable to unnecessarily burden the Indian audience by extra duty. I don't think such a course will encourage the exhibition of Indian films.

Q. I mean if you make the western film more costly, won't it encourage the exhibition of Indian films?

A. I don't think so.

Q. Don't you think increase of tariff is always looked upon as a protection for indigenous effort?

A. I have noticed that if the Indian audience want to see a picture, they pay even double the price to see it, whether it is Indian film or western film.

Q. I see you have some trenchant criticism to make regarding the educated classes; that the educated man has lost his national literature and is more in touch with the west than with the east?

A. Exactly so.

Q. So whatever you may do, these so-called educated classes will favour only western films?

A. That is so.

Q. Have the educated classes developed a taste for western life or for western scenes?

A. Western productions, as a rule, are far superior to Indian productions in everything. There is always some novelty about it, some sort of newness; and it is that thing which attracts the educated classes to the western films.

Q. The so-called illiterate or uninformed Indian favours the Indian picture and he does not care for the western film?

A. He does care but not so much as he cares for the Indian picture.

Q. You think we ought to encourage the development of the Indian film industry?

A. Yes.

Q. Don't you think it has got a very good market in the country itself?

A. If good Indian pictures are produced, there is a good market for them.

Q. You think that effort should be made to make the Indian productions attractive so that they may capture the Indian market and the bulk of the Indian audience?

A. My idea is that the Indian enterprise should now focuss itself on producing pictures, if not on a level with the western pictures still somewhere in good comparison with them. At present they fall far below the level.

Q. Won't it increase the cost to the public? Do you think the public would care to pay such high rates?

A. I don't think there is any great difference in rates as far as the Indian pictures are concerned.

Q. If you make them up to the mark you have in mind, it will cost more and, therefore, the exhibitor will have to pay more for getting them and therefore he will have to charge more to the public?

A. He will have a longer run and a greater market. Why should he charge more? He will have a greater circulation of the film and he will get a larger number of bookings. For instance, a film like "Sacrifice" ran for three weeks, and it has a better future in other provinces too. The better the picture in Bombay the better the demand elsewhere. "Sacrifice" was a success from the point of view of the educated classes. I think it was a good film.

Q. Was it a success in drawing the western educated audience?

A. Unfortunately the place selected for exhibition of "Sacrifice" was not a happy one. If they had shown it at the Empire or at the Royal Opera House, they would have had a better class of people.

Q. You think the Indian producers will unite in order to pool their resources and better their financial position?

A. I am sorry to say that co-operation is the last thing with us Indians, and lack of cohesion is a thing in which Indians excel.

Q. Is the co-operative movement spreading in your province? Is it a success?

A. I think so.

Q. Do you think it will be availed of?

A. An effort was made, but somehow or other everybody pulls his own way and the result is very disappointing.

Q. You say that Government aid should not be given in the shape of loans because they have not got the money to spare, and therefore you would recommend co-operation?

A. Yes. But I am sorry to say that there is very little cohesion among the people.

Q. Have you got any State Aid to Industries Act?

A. Till recently there was a Director of Industries, but that post has now been abolished.

Q. Is there any attempt on the part of Government to give loans to industries?

A. I am sorry to say that the Bombay Government is slack in that matter. They are not very solvent either at the present moment.

Q. You think that some efforts should be made to develop banking facilities?

A. The film industry at present is so hopelessly tottering that banks will not come forward to give them any facilities; the industry is not flourishing.

Q. You say only some concerns pay 10 or 15 per cent. dividend. On what do you base that statement?

A. From the manner in which certain producers are pulling on. I have not known of any Indian producer piling up money by film production. He does not show any signs of improving his studios.

Q. You believe in subsidies?

A. If it is possible, I would like the Government to subsidise.

Q. How? By way of pecuniary aid?

A. Yes. In what other way can they subsidise?

Q. Do you know the quota system? Do you think it can be adopted in India?

A. I am for the quota system only for Indian films, not for British films.

Q. Because you think you cannot compete on equal terms with the foreign market?

A. If an Indian film were compelled to be shown by legislation one day in the week or one week in the month by every cinema exhibitor, I think it would give a fillip to this industry and the demand would create supply.

Q. You don't think it would be harmful to the exhibitor to be compelled to do that?

A. It would. Certain exhibitors would resent it, but gradually their audiences would become accustomed to expect Indian pictures on one particular day, say Monday or Wednesday, and I think it could be managed; because all will have the supply alike, and there will be no falling off.

Q. And it will lead to the gradual cultivation of the audience's taste for Indian pictures?

A. Yes. I am for the quota system.

Q. You have not mentioned it among the recommendations you make as to what can be done.

A. I have done so somewhere.

Q. Now, as regards the censors' board, you advocate very strongly a large panel on which censors of each place should be represented?

A. Yes, Sir, I recommend a panel of about 20.

Q. How many persons should examine each film?

A. Two at least at a time.

Q. And you think sufficient men will be available assuming that they have to work about 3 hours a day?

A. Oh yes, Sir. I may give the instance of the honorary presidency magistrates. They are nominated by Government. You will find any number of very respectable and highly qualified gentlemen, professional gentlemen, very busy all of them, willing to take up this work one hour in the morning.

*Mr. Green:* How many times a week?

A. I get at least two or three turns in the month. This month I had four turns.

*Chairman:* You think the same class of people can be resorted to?

A. Most easily, and more good people would come even to do this work honorary.

Q. You don't believe in honorary work, do you?

A. Why not? I think honorary work is best.

Q. In theory.

A. But in the case of the honorary presidency magistrates it works very well.

Q. Yes, because it gives them a dignity.

A. It is an equally dignified work for any one to censor a film.

Q. Do you think it would give some position?—or, say, give them the salute of the police?

A. It will give them the rank of magistrate over this industry.

Q. Anyway, you think people will be available, much more available if you make it a paying business too?

A. Oh yes.

Q. I mean sparing about 5 or 6 hours a week.

A. When you make a large panel of 20 men, you don't need to sit five hours a week.

*Mr. Green:* Surely it depends on the volume of work?

A. Take two at a time and it will give you 10 benches of censors.

Q. Sitting throughout the day?

A. Well, then, make the panel larger still.

Q. You think a larger panel can be secured? How many hours can you set them?

A. Two hours a day. One day in the week or perhaps two days at most.

*Chairman:* If you introduce too many men like that, uniformity of standard will suffer.

A. That is what happens even in the penalties we inflict on the magistrate's bench. There is no standardisation of penalties.

*Mr. Green:* May I point out that that is possibly one of the reasons why the power of the magistrates are confined to the smaller cases?

A. It would be very easy, I think, to pick out about 40 men, good men and true, on whose judgment you can rely.

Q. At present the amount of censoring work in Bombay alone is from 3 to 3½ hours every day in the week merely inspecting the films. That is likely to increase very considerably, in fact it is increasing. So you would have to find two censors on your scheme you yourself say 2 or 4 hours a week. That would not carry you very far. May I take your own instance? You are a busy man, a presidency magistrate, and your presidency magistrate's work takes up 2 to 4 hours a month. Would you be able personally to find time with your other activities to go and see a film taking say 2 hours once a week.

A. I would.

Q. Could you do it if it were twice a week?

A. Well, I would try.

*Q.* I am on the question of practical politics only. One other point. You would not be able to decide exactly when that work was to be done.

*A.* Of course, that must suit my own convenience.

*Q.* That is the trouble. You would also have to suit the convenience of the other members who have to inspect the film and of the person who wants the film censored. At present the inspection has to be put through before the evening, as in the evening the theatres have got audiences.

*A.* Those are matters of detail and it could be done, Sir.

*Q.* Well, I don't quite agree with you. One has to work out details. I have questioned many witnesses about this.

*A.* But what happens on the honorary magistrate's bench?

*Q.* That is four hours a month. The work here is immensely greater

*A.* For three hours a day, that gives you 20 hours per week.

*Q.* Let me give you figures. In 1927 the amount of films examined in Bombay was over 3½ million feet. That is equivalent to 877 hours a year. Which is equivalent to 3½ hours a day, five days in the week throughout the year. And that is a figure which is going to increase.

*A.* Yes, it gives you 20 hours' work per week. But these 20 hours work will be distributed between 20 people or so—10 benches would do two hours a week each.

*Q.* Quite so. But that figure again is likely to increase. It is not only a question of the actual inspection. You have got to get to the place of exhibition which may take 20 minutes or half an hour. You have then got to see the film and then to write your report and discuss it at the periodical meetings. And all that is going to take up time and if you increased your panel, as the chairman pointed out, you get no standard of uniformity whatsoever.

*A.* Standard of uniformity after all is a subjective matter. If you can rely on the person's judgment then you must rely on his discretion whether such and such a film will do or not.

*Q.* And supposing there is an objection later, the board has to answer for it.

*A.* He has got to answer to the board.

*Q.* And the board has to answer to the public.

*A.* Well, that will happen even now. They have to be answerable to the public.

*Chairman:* You are not for omitting all scenes of kissing, embracing and so on?

*A.* I don't think kissing and embracing alone does much harm.

*Q.* But still you advocate a stricter censorship.

*A.* Yes, in certain American films. I should like to explain. In certain American films that I have seen they showed the somewhat rather westernised mode of sex life. At least in a film that I saw they made a story of 4 persons, 2 young girls and 2 young men, going out camping and making an experiment of love without marriage.

*Q.* What was the name of the films?

*A.* I think it was *The Wine of Youth*. I forget the exact name but I think it was released at the Wellington Cinema. And it at once struck me that it gave a sort of exaggerated impression of western serial life to Indians.

*Q.* You mean the tone of the story?

*A.* Yes, the tone. The moral of it was not very conductive to our Indian ideas of feminine virtue. Now, these four people going without a chaperon and trying to live in bathing costumes—I don't think the censors would have passed it in an Indian picture here.

*Mr. Green:* Were they represented as living in sexual relationship?



A. No, there was not any suggestion about that. But still the mind would construe it.

Chairman: Well, you are not, as you put it, of the opinion that films should be excluded merely on puritanical grounds?

A. I don't believe in too much puritanism in a matter which is purely for recreation and entertainment.

Q. And therefore the remedy seems to be to have the judgment of the people? You want to leave it to the judgment of the censor?

A. That is right.

Q. Only you would make it a body of censors.

A. I am not at all satisfied with the methods of the present censorship. If you will ask me questions about it I will explain more fully.

Q. You mean the present method of only one man seeing a film?

A. No, Sir, the main difficulty is that there is one standard of censorship for Indian films and another standard for foreign films. That is what I have been reiterating often. The list which I understand the censors board has given to Indian producers and exhibitors states that such and such scenes must not be exhibited; but if that list were strictly adhered to no foreign film could be shown in Bombay. Now that standard is rigidly applied in the case of Indian films, but they are very loosely applied in the case of foreign films.

Q. But do you think, for instance, supposing the Indian scenes were depicted, are there certain things in Indian life which occur in the west and do not occur in the east and therefore they would require a different treatment? For instance scenes of kissing and embracing would not occur in an Indian film.

A. I have not seen much kissing and embracing in Indian pictures.

Q. No, they would avoid it because it would not suit the theme. Therefore in that way it requires different rules of censorship? Or do you think the same rules of censorship should apply?

A. There ought to be one normal standard for both classes. Morality is the same wherever you go.

Q. I want to know something about this "Handsome Blackguard;" you say it was banned in Delhi?

A. I read in the papers it was forbidden in Delhi once because at that time there was some agitation about a Muhammadan shooting a Hindu, and in my film a Muhammadan, who is a detective, shoots a fellow and on that score it was banned only in Delhi. Since then I have not heard of its being banned anywhere. A Muhammadan shoots a Parsi nabob.

Q. Now, as regards the currency of the censor's certificate. Supposing there were only provincial boards. Would you advocate that once a film is passed in one province it should have currency throughout unless it is stopped in a particular locality?

A. I think a film should be censored everywhere locally.

Q. In each province?

A. Yes, because ideas and circumstances are different in each province. I am for censoring a film in each province afresh.

Q. Would you make a difference between Sind and Bombay?

A. I would.

Q. Would you make a difference between Madras and Bombay?

A. I would.

Q. That would be complicating the machinery and interfering with the trade.

A. Somehow my ideas are that some films which are very harmless in Bombay may be very harmful in Lahore.

Q. It is only a theory. After all in six or seven years of work only five films were found to be objectionable in other parts of the country.

A. I told Mr. Gandhi I had my doubts if his "Sacrifice" would be allowed in Lahore.

Q. It is only a rare case. Would you make it a general rule that every film should pass through each of the 9 or 10 provinces? I mean it would seriously interfere with the industry.

A. Would it? Why should it? In every province the exhibitor would get it censored.

Q. He would have to pay afresh.

A. Then keep the licensing fee very low.

Q. Then you cannot pay for the boards.

A. Government ought to stand that expense.

Q. On what grounds?

A. After all the Government is doing it for the public good. Government ought to bear a little expense on the censorship board.

Q. If each province were to run a censorship board and censor films, it would mean reduplication of work, and after all what is the justification? There must be some justification on actual experience.

A. The justification is this, Sir, that in the present state of India, every thing is so uncertain and so different everywhere. There are inter-communal misunderstandings in one province which do not exist in another. And that is why at least for the present, until affairs get back to normal, this sort of thing must be resorted to and Government and the industry must bear the expenditure and share alike. That would be a very salutary rule.

Q. Now, you say that posters and handbills need not be censored. You have not found anything objectionable in your experience?

A. None whatever.

Q. Now, I want to come to this point in answer to question 45. You want a certain amount of control in the production places, your object being to see that undesirable films are not produced. But that object is attained by the censoring, isn't it?

A. Yes, a little rigorous censoring is required.

Q. So you don't insist upon the Government having control over the places of production in any other way? I mean in India?

A. I don't think that that is necessary.

Q. But you say it is desirable that all film producing agencies should be registered and licensed and their studios periodically inspected.

A. Yes, I think that is necessary. On the same grounds that theatres are inspected, studios might be inspected. There might be an undesirable atmosphere prevailing there.

Q. Would it not be exposing them to the petty annoyance of petty officials?

A. These studios do require inspection in every way.

Q. On grounds of sanitation?

A. On other grounds also—morals, for instance.

Q. But nobody lives there—they use them in the day time.

A. I should not like the Indian studios to become rendezvous for a very shady class of people.

Q. Which studio did you use for your productions?

A. The "Handsome Blackguard" was shot at Kohinoor, and the other two were shot at Mr. Irani's Imperial studio at Grant Road.

Q. You think that registration is essential, registration, licensing and periodical inspection?

A. Yes, Sir.

Q. Do you expect the trade to flourish under these terms? You don't think it will interfere with the method of the industry?

A. No.

Mr. Neogy: I have very few questions to ask. You said you took part in the production of some films—three of them?

A. Yes.

Q. Where did you get your actors and actresses from?

A. They were in the studio. I may mention, however, that I insisted on two European ladies taking part in my "Handsome Blackguard" and they did take part, but they only came and went away.

Q. Did you have any amateur educated Indian also taking part?

A. No.

Q. I mean men?

A. No.

Q. So the work done by these people was quite up to your expectation?

A. Fairly good.

Q. Had you any complaint to make about the atmosphere of the studio while you were taking those pictures?

A. With the permission of your President I will answer that question in camera.

Q. Are you aware of the sort of life that is led in Hollywood in America?

A. I have read a lot about it.

Q. Do you think things are ideal there?

A. Oh, no! Of course not. Even if 5 per cent. of what I often read is correct, it is anything but ideal.

Q. I think your object is to try and secure a far better atmosphere established in the Indian studios than obtains in foreign studios?

A. I don't know what obtains in foreign countries, but I would like to have a clearer atmosphere here.

Q. You are more anxious about your own country?

A. Yes.

Q. I suppose you have some experience of Bengal?

A. No.

Q. Are you aware that the stage in Bengal has attracted educated men?

A. Yes, I am aware of that fact.

Q. And that the actresses are almost all drawn not from a very reputable class of women?

A. I do not know anything about that.

Q. You have no opinion about the stage in Bengal?

A. I may mention my complete ignorance about Bengal.

Q. You suggest inspection of the studios in the interests of morals as well as on sanitary grounds. By whom should this inspection be done?

A. In the same way as inspectors are appointed for theatres. The work could be done by these very inspectors.

Q. Under which department of government would you place these inspectors?

A. The Police.

Q. About the influence of the cinema on crime, I find you have a suggestion, a very definite suggestion to make. You refer to certain instances in which the cinema can be held responsible for certain kinds of crime. You have mentioned a few.

A. Yes.

Q. I take it that the cases of this nature which come up to the courts of law are reported in your newspapers and you generally derive your information from your paper.

A. Yes.

Q. Now, may I draw your attention to a cutting which was handed over to us from your paper, dated the 4th November 1927 which has got this headline—"Servant tried on his master what he saw in the cinema". Then follows a report of a police court case. Now, if you go through the extract you find there is nothing there referring to the cinema as having anything to do with the suggestion. Has your attention been drawn to it?

A. Yes. I take it it is an inference drawn by my police court reporter that this sort of thing could be done only by seeing it on the screen. Therefore he put it like that. I myself am not aware where he got it from.

Q. The judgment of the sub-editorial staff in these matters may sometimes be influenced by general prejudices of this kind?

A. Yes.

*Chairman:* When you came to know this, did you enquire about this?

A. I asked the reporter. He said, "He must have got it from the cinema. Otherwise how could he do it?"

*Mr. Neogy:* In one place you say it would be desirable to have the resources of some of the existing concerns united.

A. Yes.

Q. Would you have any objection to any such action being taken on the ground that it might tend to the creation of a monopoly?

A. I do not think so. Why should there be a monopoly?

Q. You do believe in a combination of resources like this?

A. Yes.

Q. Merely because a single person or an organisation has come to acquire a number of concerns, theatres or studios, I do not think you will take that to be in the nature of a monopoly?

A. No.

Q. And I take it your considered view is that such a combination would lead to very good results in the cinema trade?

A. Exactly so.

Q. About censorship. Supposing we agree to the constitution of the censorship board as suggested by you, do you agree that all these members of the censorship board should be nominated by Government?

A. I myself as a rule prefer nominations to elections; but there ought to be a provision in that nomination that at least some people of the trade ought to be represented on the Board.

Q. You would leave it to nomination, subject to certain interests being represented?

A. Yes.

*Chairman:* Do you include people in the cinema trade?

A. Say, two representatives of the exhibitors, two representatives of the producers; two ladies I would recommend and so on.

*Mr. Neogy:* Would you object to the Corporation and the University also making their own nominations on this Board?

A. I do not see how the Corporation comes in but the University may perhaps be represented. Government may nominate one from the University.

Q. Don't you think that the Corporation is in touch with the organisations of social workers, for instance, who might be a very desirable set of people?

A. There are social workers and social bodies doing their own work; for instance, the Vigilance Association and so on.

Q. Don't you think they ought to be represented on this Board?

A. They may be.

Q. You would leave their nomination to the Government?

A. Yes.

Q. You suggested that you visualise a body of men on the lines more or less of honorary magistrates?

A. Yes.

Q. Would you consider it any special attraction for members of the film censorship board if they were given a sort of fee for attendance at a meeting, which the honorary magistrates don't get? Would that be an attraction?

A. It would be.

Q. And from the nature of the work itself do you think it would be more interesting than the average honorary magistrate's work?

A. Yes, seeing films and all that.

Q. In your opinion there are certain factors to commend this particular kind of work to a desirable set of people more than the ordinary work of an honorary magistrate at the present time?

A. I do not understand your question.

Q. What I want to know is whether you consider the work of the censorship board, having regard to this and other facts I have mentioned would be considered to be more attractive than the work done by honorary magistrates?

A. I think so. It is attractive in this way that it would be more pleasant. In the other work one has got a little amount of dignity, the police coming and salaaming to you, people getting up when you go and all that sort of thing.

Q. I take it that it might be possible more easily to attract a desirable class of men to this kind of work than that of the honorary magistrate?

A. I think so.

Q. Now you stated that if all the rules of the censorship board were to be followed no foreign film would be shown.

A. Yes.

Q. What standard would you yourself ask the censorship board to follow? Do you want them to follow all their rules or do you not?

A. There is, I think, a rule that no picture should have two persons of the opposite sex sleeping together on a bed. (A copy of the rules handed in to the witness). There are a number of things here which practically every foreign film shows. The *modus operandi* of criminals . . .

Mr. Green: Is it not a question of degree?

A. What do you mean by degree? I see foreign films in which criminals operate and we are all very much amused at their success in the film. Cruelty to young infants—that we see very often on the foreign film. Unnecessary exhibition of feminine underclothing—we see a lot of it in the foreign film. Practically when you go over this list and see the average western film, you will see that a western film would be impossible if all these were adhered to. It is impossible, and I know they are not adhered to. My complaint is that most of them are adhered to in Indian films.

Mr. Neogy: Your complaint is that two different standards are observed?

A. Yes.

Q. Would you have the Indian standard adopted with reference to the western, or the western standard adopted with reference to the Indian, in order to bring about a uniformity?

A. I won't make it a hard and fast rule. It depends upon the place where the picture is shown, the audience.....

Q. And the theme also?

A. Yes. And I should like to observe the Indian standard in the Indian theatres where you have mostly Indian audience, but say in a place like the Empire where you get European audiences, most Parsi audiences and cultured audiences, this sort of kissing and embracing and half nude bodies do not matter.

Q. You will confine certain pictures to certain theatres? Do you mean to say that the Censorship Board is to specify a particular theatre in the town of Bombay where a particular picture could be shown?

A. To Indian audiences I would apply the axe more. The censors are doing that to a certain extent.

Mr. Green: In the license, say, to the Excelsior Theatre would you prohibit any Indian going there? Would you prohibit yourself?

A. What I want to say is that the angle of vision of the different communities is so different in this matter that you can never put down any hard and fast rule.

Chairman: The only remedy, then, is as a gentleman who calls himself the President of the Voters' Association says, stop all cinemas.

A. Life would be miserable then.

Mr. Coartman: You say in your written statement a great deal about the lack of skilled technique, intelligent direction and so on, generally. So you would agree that it would be a good thing to bring as much intelligent opinion as possible to bear on the film industry in this country?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you write critiques of films in your newspaper?

A. Yes.

Q. For example, if I take up your paper on any day I would find a critique of films?

A. Yes. Generally on Saturdays.

Q. What films will they refer to, to western films?

A. Mostly foreign films, and Indian films too. As a matter of fact all these exhibitors advertise in our newspapers.

Q. I will come to that in a minute. I would like just to ask you about the critique. Most of your critiques deal with foreign films, I think you said that?

A. No. I said we have a large number of reviewing paragraphs about cinema theatres showing foreign films; and of course, there are paragraphs for Indian films too.

Q. Don't you think that if you devote more attention to the Indian film you might help to educate Indian public opinion on the subject?

A. You are aware that we paperwallas are out to make money. We have our Indian advertisers and European advertisers. When I say critique I do not mean criticism in the usual accepted sense of hostile criticism, I am using the word in its correct sense.....

Mr. Green: Appreciation?

A. If I may frankly confess to you, all newspapers get critique paragraphs typewritten from the exhibitors themselves. That is my frank confession (Laughter).

Mr. Neogy: In the case of foreign films they get it from the foreign producers ready made?

A. Ready made, cut and dry, only to be sent down to the printer.

Mr. Coartman: It is a very interesting piece of information. But do you think if you could follow your own bent and write critiques on Indian films—do you think such critiques would have a good effect?

A. Yes. But it would adversely affect our advertisement income.

Q. One more point on the subject of critiques. Do you think that a rightly written critique on an Indian produced film would tend to inspire in those who read it a desire to see the particular film?

A. Certainly it would.

Q. And supposing your newspaper circulated in some taluq town where there is no theatre, a town of 8 or 9 thousand people, would that not stimulate the local people to have their theatre?

A. A cinema theatre there?

Q. Yes. Overcoming the ordinary difficulties which you find in such a place?

A. It depends upon the facilities there are there for a cinema house.

Q. The point I want to make is, it has been represented to us by more than one witness that a town of 8 or 9 thousand is hardly the place for opening a cinema. May I put it to you it is due to the fact that there is not at present the interest and the desire to see films?

A. Yes. They have not a very clear idea of what a cinema is.

Q. And such desire might be stimulated?

A. Not by newspapers publishing it. Most of them do not read the Bombay newspapers there.

Q. Independent and clever newspaper critiques of films might raise the whole standard of public appreciation?

A. The producers and the exhibitors always resent anything that would tend to lower their house, and—frankly—we cannot afford really to offend a very large source of our income. Cinema advertisement is certainly one of the largest sources of income of every newspaper in Bombay. They are the largest advertisers.

Q. I would just like to finish this one point. It seems to me that it would be a good thing if newspapers could help to create a certain standard of public opinion in this matter. Do you think so?

A. Newspapers can do a very great deal if they want to, but the question is whether they will.

Q. Let us come to advertisement. You say that advertisement forms a large part of your newspaper income?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you include cinema advertisement in that?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you charge them special rates?

A. We do not charge the usual rates that we charge to others, but certain reduced rates.

Q. Can you without betraying any secrets tell me how much you charge for the cinema advertisement?

A. We have got our illustrated picture page and for a picture page we charge Rs. 1-4-0 per inch of column, and for the other page we charge them at one rupee an inch. If the advertisement exceeds half a page we give them 10 per cent. off.

Q. Speaking not as a newspaper editor who is anxious to get this advertisement but as an educated member of the public,—do the Indian cinema theatres and producers advertise sufficiently?

A. Yes. They advertise very largely.

Q. You are quite satisfied?

A. They are following the western picture houses quite closely.

Q. Who writes the advertisement? There is no special advertising agency who make it a profession to write advertisements?

A. No. We do not have such advertisement writers here.

Colonel Crawford: You have no doubt that the film to-day is a tremendous power in the world?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think that justifies Government guidance?

A. Yes.

Q. You spoke of the quota system. You are very much in favour of the quota system for Indian films. Are you convinced that the Indian producers can to-day supply the demand for Indian films?

A. Supply will be created if there is demand.

Q. I understand the demand has already been created which they cannot supply. Have you any opinion on that point?

A. No.

Q. If they cannot supply the existing demand.....

A. I dare say probably the demand is at present more than the supply, but there is a number of studios who turn out Indian pictures, and if the demand is more, the supply would increase. And I submit that with the increased supply there would be a greater stimulus to produce better pictures. That is why I insist upon the quota system for Indian pictures only, not a combined quota system for British and Indian films.

Q. With regard to kissing, do Indians not kiss?

A. Not in the public, in any way.

Q. Most of the scenes shown on the films are scenes from private lives. If you are going to debar that and love scenes from Indian pictures, are you not taking away the pith of the picture?

A. I do not say that you should take away the love scenes. I would not like the love scenes to go out of the picture altogether, because the picture will be otherwise flat.

Q. Would it not be flat if you exclude kissing?

A. Kissing may be here and there, but not indiscriminate kissing. You have got the long kiss, the prolonged kiss, the hot kiss and the soft kiss, all sorts of kisses.

Q. Even in western pictures the kissing might be curtailed a little bit?

A. Yes.

Q. I notice on the question of Empire films you are against putting handicaps against any particular Empire film coming to India. You suggest an open market for films from other countries coming to India?

A. I am for an open market. I would not prevent any country from coming in with its products.

Q. On the question of the press, I was very much surprised to hear that the independence of the press is not so real as I thought it to be.

A. You wanted me to speak the truth and I said so candidly.

Q. I believe that frank criticism by the press would be a tremendous factor in bringing out the right sort of film. Supposing you criticise a picture honestly.

A. Our trade is so closely interwoven with the interests of the producers and exhibitors that we cannot possibly think of doing so.

Q. Just let me finish my question. Supposing you criticised a film frankly with a view to public good and the producer withdrew his advertisement, could not you through your Journalists' Association retaliate and say, "None of our papers will advertise your pictures".

A. You mean by uniting? You speak of unity?

Q. You cannot get that unity in the press?

A. It will take years to reach that millennium.

Mr. Green: I am not going to ask you about customs, because you say that the matter will have to go before the Tariff Board before any protection is given. May I take you to question No. 22. You are very much against mixing up business with sentiment, with which I entirely agree. I only want to ask one question. If this Committee were pleased, after their investi-



gation, to propose a hard business deal with either Great Britain or any other part of the Empire for a reciprocal taking of one another's films—would you have any objection to that?

A. Will you please repeat your question?

Q. If we could make a recommendation which would ensure that for every British film exhibited in India an Indian film is exhibited in Britain—would you welcome such a suggestion if it were practicable?

A. No. That won't work.

Q. Supposing after ten years when our industry has improved so as to be able to give a good return?

A. Then I think it would be a good business proposition worth consideration.

**Oral Evidence of Mr. N. B. CHANDRACHUD, M.L.C., representing Poona Municipality, on Thursday, the 17th November 1927.**

*Chairman:* You are a resident of Poona city?

A. Yes.

Q. Is that your native town also?

A. I was born in a taluka of the Poona district.

Q. Then you belong to that district?

A. Yes.

Q. And you represent the Municipality of Poona?

A. Yes.

Q. What is the population of Poona?

A. About 130,000, besides the cantonment.

Q. And the cantonment?

A. About 20,000 to 25,000.

Q. I suppose you are on the city municipality?

A. Yes.

Q. How long have you been on the municipality?

A. For the last 12 years.

Q. Are you a landholder?

A. I am by profession a pleader.

Q. How many cinemas have you got in Poona?

A. About eight, including Poona cantonment and Kirkee cantonment. In the cantonment 2, and in Kirkee cantonment two of which one is not working. They are all run by Madans.

Q. The rest of the four are in the city?

A. In the city 2 are run by Madan's. So altogether Madans have the monopoly of six cinemas. Two others are run by one Khaneri. There are only two proprietors. Formerly each cinema had a different proprietor but Madan's have taken them on lease.

Q. What pictures are shown in the city?

A. Very rarely Indian pictures are shown, about once or twice in the month in the city; and in the cantonment I believe hardly once in six months.

Q. You don't know about the cantonment?

A. I do know.

Q. Do you go to the cinema there?

A. Yes, I was connected with the cinema there from the beginning because the Napier Cinema was founded by Mr. Patel, who was my friend and client.

Q. So you used to go from the very beginning.

A. Yes.

Q. How many cinemas are there in the Indian quarter?

A. Four.

Q. At all four are Indian pictures shown very rarely?

A. Yes, once or twice a month. One cannot say definitely.

Q. I merely want a rough answer; I don't want you to be exact. Now how do you account for that, because here in Bombay city in the Indian quarters Indian pictures are shown, how is it in Poona you don't get them?

A. Perhaps Indian films cost more. Perhaps they are not so popular as foreign films.

Q. What Indian pictures are shown when they are shown at all?

A. It depends on the day. Sometimes they show Savitri or some other mythological subject more or less.

Q. I hear they have got a good producing industry in Kolhapur—the Maharashtra Company.

A. They have got two film producing companies in Poona also. One is the United Pictures Syndicate and the other—I am sorry I have forgotten the name; but there are two or three picture syndicates, though I don't think they are doing much business.

Mr. Green: Are they producing at all now.

A. They are producing. In the beginning they produced one good film. They had one Mr. Jensen who was the manager of that United Pictures Syndicate, and he was also a director. He took very good photographs of the story of Shivaji. That film made a good deal of money for them, but Mr. Jensen is gone and since his departure I don't think they are making much progress.

Q. Are they still taking pictures?

A. They are.

Chairman: What do they do with the pictures when they take them? Where do they show them?

A. They show them but they do not show them at Poona, because, so far as Poona is concerned, the only film which they showed was the film about Shivaji to which I have referred.

Q. Where does Poona get the few Indian pictures that are exhibited there?

A. Mostly from Bombay and perhaps Calcutta.

Q. Madan's, do they show any Indian pictures in their theatres?

A. Very rarely.

Q. And this other gentleman who has got his own theatre he shows them more often than Madan?

A. Yes.

Q. But does Madan show Indian pictures at all?

A. They do but very rarely.

Q. I suppose you know Bombay very well.

A. Unfortunately I have been here to the cinemas very few times.

Q. Poona people must be familiar with Bombay. Here is this gentleman who you say is the proprietor of a theatre in Poona. What is his name?

A. Kanheri. He is in Poona. He is the mortgagee in possession.

Q. So that Indian films are negligible in Poona?

A. Certainly.

Q. Foreign films occupy the field.

A. Unfortunately that is too true.

Q. And are you for encouraging the Indian industry?

A. I am, but for the time being it looks almost hopeless for the Indian industry to compete with American films.

Q. Why is it hopeless? Do you mean that American films are so cheap?

A. They are cheap and they are extremely ahead of us, one thousand times ahead. India is nowhere in the race.

Q. What do you suggest should be done for encouraging the industry?

A. There are a hundred and one things. In the first place we have not got capital. I don't want to be harsh but the industry is run by persons who collect some few thousands among their friends; they have hardly got any decent actors or actresses; and they start a show, which is foredoomed to failure.

Q. Of course you are talking of Poona. I suppose there is not much enterprise in Poona?

A. No.

Q. Maharashtras are not famous for their trading instincts. You leave all that in the hands of Gujeratis?

A. Yes. But unless we send some specially selected men to America to train them as experts in acting or the cinema industry, I think we shall never be able to do anything.

Q. Then you have no other suggestions to make in this connection. Has the Municipality considered this question at all?

A. They are sending you a statement. I do not know whether they have sent it yet or not, but they are going to send in a written statement.

Q. I got a letter—I am sorry I left it at home—from a gentleman calling himself the president of the Voters Association. Do you know what the Association is?

A. More or less a paper association.

Q. Do you think the cinema as shown there has got a bad influence on the Indian public in any way.

A. I would not think that way.

Q. Do you think it has any demoralising effect on the Indian public?

A. I don't think that you can condemn it wholesale.

Q. Has it any influence on the Indian public in any way?

A. No, I don't think so.

Q. They simply take it as an amusement and don't think of it?

A. Yes. Some police officers may be taking a hint.

Q. I don't mean crime. Are the morals of the people likely to be affected?

A. I don't think so.

Q. Do you think the present censorship is satisfactory?

A. I would think so.

Q. You don't think stricter censorship is called for?

A. No.

Q. Is there any increase of crime in Poona city on account of the cinema?

A. No.

Q. Do you take much interest in politics?

A. I do. I am a member of the Legislative Council also.

Q. I am sorry. Now as a member of the Legislative Council what are your views regarding the quota system to compel every cinema to show Indian films? Do you think that will be acceptable so that it may be an indirect method of encouraging the Indian industry?

A. If you refer to Indian films, I may say that Indian films are popular only on some particular days and for particular localities; they are not popular all round.

*Q.* But you have not tried it at your place?

*A.* They have tried it. They show them once for a day or two at a time and then immediately on the third day there is no attraction.

*Q.* I should like to go more thoroughly into it. It comes to us as a surprise having regard to the evidence we have had in Bombay. In Bombay Indian films are growing more and more popular.

*A.* Unfortunately it is not so in Poona. Perhaps it is because Madams have cornered these six theatres and they do not like to import these Indian films. That may be the reason; I don't know.

*Q.* Have you got any experience of any other city in the Bombay Presidency.

*A.* No. So far as Poona is concerned I think Poona can boast of more cinemas; we have six cinemas; while Bombay with a population of 10 lakhs cannot boast more than 20 or 25 cinemas.

*Q.* Now what do you say about the quota system.

*A.* I think it will not be advantageous to the cinema proprietors.

*Q.* I admit it won't be advantageous to cinema proprietors, but to the producers?

*A.* Well, unless the proprietors succeed in getting a good audience they won't take your films?

*Q.* From the experience of Bombay one can say they must get good audiences.

*A.* I cannot tell you as I have no experience.

*Q.* You would rather not give an opinion on that point.

*A.* Exactly.

*Q.* I suppose if that is your case for Indian films probably you have much less liking for any Imperial preference. You object to it?

*A.* I would object to it.

*Mr. Green:* The Chairman has told you that the evidence tendered in Bombay goes to show very strongly that to the less educated classes the Indian film is the chief attraction and you tell us that in Poona very few Indian films are shown. I have before me a written statement by the proprietor of Bharat Cinema, Poona. Is that one of the independent theatres?

*A.* That is owned by Kanheri. It was only started about a year or two ago.

*Chairman:* Have you ever been there?

*A.* I have.

*Mr. Green:* He tends to agree that Indian films are popular among Indians but he says he cannot get them. The inadequate supply of films of Indian manufacture he definitely refers to.

*A.* As I told you, Indian films are popular only on some particular occasions. If you exhibit them all the year round, they would not attract. They are popular only on some particular days.

*Q.* I will put the question in another way. What class of people go to the cinemas in Poona? We know that in the cantonment the soldiers would go. Europeans would go and educated Indians would go to a certain extent. Do the less educated go in Poona?

*A.* More. I think the percentage would be 60 per cent. illiterate.

*Q.* Even in the cantonment?

*A.* No, in the city. In the cantonment very few illiterates go. The cantonment population is more refined than the city population.

*Q.* Have you ever seen one of these Indian films?

*A.* I have.

*Q.* How did the audience like it.

A. When you compare it side by side with any American film it was not up to much.

Q. You, as an educated gentleman, would be more likely to prefer a Western film because it is a better production, there is better acting in it and so on.

A. From a patriotic point of view I should prefer an Indian film.

Q. But say the labourer in the field, the worker on the road, does he also prefer Western films showing a civilisation which he does not know or understand?

A. Certainly even the labourer would prefer the Western film.

Q. Do you think that if a good Indian film were shown to him he would not prefer it?

A. I cannot tell you unless I know. For instance, Tagore's film they say is an extraordinary production; but unfortunately I have not seen.

Q. Then you cannot say whether that will attract. Could you tell me approximately what prices the lower classes pay for their seats, what the tickets cost?

A. The lowest rate is two annas in the city and I think in the cantonment it is four annas.

Q. And how many shows do they have a day in the city?

A. Mostly three.

Q. Are those cheap seats always full?

A. Yes, more than full. Most of the audience consists of the cheap seats, two annas and four annas.

Q. Do you think you could tell us whether these audiences include other people who come in from the district?

A. Yes. If a stranger comes to Poona he would go to the cinema sometimes as a pastime.

Q. When in the city Western films are shown in which you find scenes of lovemaking in the Western fashion, to your knowledge have the audience expressed any surprise in any way?

A. No.

Colonel Crawford: I have only one question to ask you. You say you have not visited cinemas very often.

A. In Bombay. In Bombay I have visited cinemas.

Q. Fairly frequently.

A. Yes.

Q. Do you consider the moral standard of the films shown generally suitable?

A. Yes, I think it suitable.

Q. There is nothing harmful in the present standard?

A. I do not think it is harmful.

Mr. Neogy: You said that at one time the different theatres used to belong to different proprietors. When was the change brought about.

A. It was brought about approximately three or four years ago.

Q. And what were the circumstances that led to this change?

A. Because these cinemas enjoyed a very extraordinary harvest in wartime and they thought, rightly or wrongly, that they would continue to get the same harvest as they got in wartime. Unfortunately their expenses increased and many proprietors incurred debts, and in order to pay their debts they had to mortgage their cinemas and mortgages are in possession of those cinemas. The cinema owned by Mr. Kanheri, for example, is a mortgaged one. The original founder has made an application for insolvency. The Napier Cinema was owned by Mr. Patel. He was indebted and mortgaged it. Madans have given a good rent and leased the theatres and cinemas, Madans enjoy to a certain extent a monopoly of these cinemas and on account

of the monopoly they can afford to run these cinemas because independent proprietors find great difficulty in getting these films.

*Q.* So your opinion is that if these theatres were left in the hands of individual proprietors they would find it difficult to make both ends meet and survive?

*A.* Specially in competition with Madans.

*Q.* And when Madans came in, they came in because other people had failed in their business and Madans were the only people in the field to offer a good price. More or less that is the position?

*A.* Yes. May I make a suggestion about the entertainment tax? The cinema proprietors have some grievance about this, specially in the cantonments. Because they say the mode of collection is rather harassing. They suffer harassment from subordinate officers. A gentleman can well afford to pay Rs. 5 for a ticket but as a matter of fact he is not inclined to pay ten annas for his entertainment tax. In the city most of the audience pay two annas and four annas and they don't have to pay the entertainment tax. I don't know the exact amount collected, but if the amount collected is not very large, if it be negligible, it gives rise to unnecessary harassment and is a handicap to the industry.

*Q.* Do you believe in it yourself?

*A.* I do, because a man, if he pay Rs. 5 for a ticket, says to himself he is paying it for himself, but if he has to pay 10 annas for the tax, he thinks he is paying for somebody else not for his own pleasure. Therefore the tax is very unpopular.

*Q.* Have you taken any steps in the Legislative Council to remove that hardship.

*A.* As a matter of fact the entertainment tax was introduced before I became a member.

*Q.* Still can't you bring in an amendment or move a Resolution.

*A.* I don't think the Government will accept any such resolution, specially in their present financial position.

*Q.* Is that the reason or is it that you did not feel the pinch of it till now. How do your provincial finances stand now?

*A.* On account of the flood in Gujerat I expect there has to be a deficit and it will be very difficult for the Finance Member to make both ends meet because the Government have had to spend a lot there.

*Q.* Do you think the pressure on the trade is so great owing to this entertainment tax that it needs any immediate attention?

*A.* Well as the mouthpiece of the cinema proprietors, I must tell you it is; as an individual I don't think so.

**Written Statement of Mr. ALEX. HAGUE, Sole Proprietor, Pathe, India, dated the 1st November 1927.**

1. I am the Sole Agent for Pathé and First National Pictures for India, Burma and Ceylon, two of the largest Film Companies in the world, and have been connected with the trade from its very inception, not only in this country but abroad as well. My firm, Pathé, was established in India in 1907 under my managership, and I can claim to be the pioneer of the industry in this country. My firm is at present the largest distributing organisation in India, with branches in Delhi, Lahore, Rangoon and Madras and Head Office in Bombay. I have also agents in Calcutta and Colombo and possess knowledge of every centre throughout the country. I am also the largest dealer in Cinematograph Apparatus both for public and home entertainment, and supply the trade with raw stock (virgin films) which are so necessary for the film producing industry.

I have been, and still am, intimately in touch with the production side of films in Europe and America and know every detail thereof.

I pay frequent visits to Europe and America and was member of a special Delegation which went to Hollywood (California) in May last in order to get acquainted with the most modern method of production in a Studio which has recently been put up by my firm at a cost of over Two Million Dollars.

I also own and operate a laboratory in Bombay and possess special knowledge of the requirements of developing and printing films in India. In fact, there is no branch of the Industry with which I am not acquainted.

I am interested in production of films in England, where both of my firms, Pathé and First National Pictures, have recently established large studios, and am also the largest importer of British pictures in this country.

#### GENERAL.

2. (a) Both the educated classes and the illiterates patronise the Cinema. The number of illiterate classes is decidedly on the increase. This embodies the whole of India.

(b) This differs according to the class of film. In theatres which cater for higher classes and show imported pictures of a better type the composition is approximately as follows:—

	Per cent.
Europeans . . . . .	30
Educated Indians . . . . .	40
Illiterates . . . . .	30

In houses where pictures of a different type are shown, such as adventure stories, the composition is approximately as follows:—

	Per cent.
Europeans . . . . .	10
Educated Indians . . . . .	40
Illiterates . . . . .	50

In houses where Indian films are shown:—

	Per cent.
Europeans . . . . .	Nil.
Educated Indians . . . . .	40
Illiterates . . . . .	60

(c) This is rather an awkward question as a 'child' of 14 in India may have a few children of his or her own. I should think children of under 10 average about 5 per cent. amongst Indians, and 10 per cent. amongst Europeans.

#### PART I.

##### *Film Industry in India.*

3. The educated classes like a good social drama. The illiterates prefer 'adventure' or 'action' dramas, in which a good deal of 'fighting' or 'stunts' occur and the story of which is easy to understand. Both classes like comedy films. Throughout India, even with Europeans, comedy films are most popular. The Indians also appreciate the 'spectacular' films.

4. The Exhibitors in this country are generally so ignorant of their own business that I do not think any of them even worries about giving the

Public what the Public really wants. The majority of these Exhibitors simply look to the cost of a picture and will not take anything which is not cheap, ignoring the quality all the time. This tends to cheaper pictures being imported and the better ones remaining away from the public.

5. Indian Films, such as are produced at present, are available, but I doubt if any of these films have ever attempted to depict real 'Indian life'.

(a) They are not of good quality.

(b) They certainly are popular.

(c) It depends upon the theatre and the locality in which an Indian film is shown. In a high class theatre the Indian films would fail miserably, but theatres situated in Indian quarters certainly make more money with Indian films than with the Imported film. Several Indian films such as 'Gulbakavli' and 'Pati Bhakti' have been very successful, but in point of actual gross receipts I do not think any Indian film has beaten the record of imported pictures, such as those of Chas. Chaplin, Harold Lloyd and Douglas Fairbanks, etc.

6. (a) Yes. I think a great future awaits for the Indian film, and the big business, on same scale as in America, can only be built up in this country with Indian films. There are tremendous opportunities in this country which only need developing and India in itself can become one of the greatest markets in the world.

Much work, however, will have to be done before pictures with 'Indian Artists' in them can ever be really successful.

(b) (1) Historical Stories and Social Stories to the educated classes,

(2) 'Adventure' Stories to the illiterates.

Mythological films will of course have its appeal to the particular section of the public to whose religious beliefs it may refer to. Personally, I do not believe in turning out 'religious' pictures on a large scale, and it is best to have films which would appeal to everyone.

7. There is no difficulty in obtaining films for the Troops. British troops like 'Dare Devil Riding' and 'Stunt' pictures of which quite a number are available. With regard to 'Indian Troops' I have never been approached for any special films for them and I do not think any effort is made to provide Indian Regiments with 'Cinemas' same as the British Sections, and therefore I cannot say what the Indian troops require, but I should imagine they would like the same kind of stories as the British Tommies.

8. (a) No.

(b) *Production*.—As regards production the industry in India does not progress for the following reasons:—

1. Lack of Capital.

2. No talent of any kind available in the country.

3. The refusal of people who are interested in production side to learn anything and adopt modern methods.

*Distribution*.—This suffers considerably owing to the monopolistic attitude adopted by certain Exhibitors.

*Exhibition*.—It is, in my opinion, in a perfect chaos. An average Exhibitor pays no regard to the *quality* of the film, and the way he presents his programmes to the public shows that he pays still less attention as to what the public wants. I know Exhibitors who never go inside their own theatres.

As regards the suggestion for improving the three branches of the industry, Government help as detailed hereafter would perhaps go a long way in improving matters.

9. Yes. But not every exhibitor cares to buy good films.



There is a great tendency just now to the creation of a monopoly in the exhibition side of the industry, which is harmful to everyone and must ultimately destroy all enterprise.

There is no tendency to create monopoly in the supply of pictures, and I do not think it is possible to do so, although certain exhibitors who are trying to establish a monopoly in showing business would, if they succeed, naturally create a monopoly in the supply as well by tying up everything that may be available and thus stifle all new business.

Certain cantonment authorities assist to create 'monopolies' by not granting licenses to more than one person which, I think, should be rectified.

10. Yes, all these systems exist in India, but they are entirely in the exhibitor's favour and prejudicial both to the Trade and the Public.

The advantage to the exhibitor is that he buys his pictures 'cheap' because he buys a 'block' at once. The disadvantage to the public is that the exhibitor forces on the public all the 'dud' pictures which he so buys.

The 'Key Theatre' situation is getting very serious at present because of the effort of certain exhibitors to establish a monopoly. It really means that if theatres in Key Cities like Bombay, Calcutta and Rangoon pass into one hand, the people in control can easily shut out any pictures, irrespective of their quality, which they do not want, and force on the public just what they want them to see.

11. Yes, but not one of them takes any advantage of it.

It is difficult to make any suggestions in this matter, because it would be impossible to force any exhibitor to preview pictures, if he does not want to do so. Besides, most of the exhibitors, if they did see a picture beforehand, will not know whether it is good or bad.

The difficulty can only be solved by creating a fresh circuit of theatres all over the country, which should be managed by intelligent people and which will compel every exhibitor to book and show the proper kind of picture.

12. The Amusement Tax, in my opinion, is a positive disgrace and a curse to the industry. It must eventually destroy the whole fabric and all efforts inspired by the Government to 'save' or help the industry will be nullified if the Tax is allowed to be continued. I am in touch with every theatre in the country and can say that majority of them are losing money to-day because of this tax. In many cases the amount of tax paid represents the exact amount of loss incurred. The Cinema in this country is still in its infancy and to put such a burden on it is perfectly atrocious. The Cinema caters for the general public and its patrons are drawn from the middle and lower classes, neither of whom can afford to pay much. It has been found that the proprietors of cinemas are compelled to keep the old prices and pay the Tax out of their own pockets. It is a well known fact that cinemas do well when the public have a certain amount of money to spend. But in these depressed times the surplus money is not there and therefore the gross income of cinemas is not the same as it used to be before, or may be in future. I am in touch with every theatre in the country and I must say that the Tax should be removed as early as possible, unless total ruin is looked for.

13. It does not affect the exhibitor very much at present and on the whole I think it is quite equitable, although in some cases the present method of assessing duty is rather heavy on certain class of films. For instance, films like the News reels pay far heavier duty as they are assessed on the same scale as the rest of the films. A revision in such cases, I think, is necessary.

As regards the indigenous production, the duty on raw stock should be reduced to 5 per cent. as cost of raw stock plays a big part in picture production.

I also think the duty on cinematograph apparatus and accessories should be reduced to 2½ per cent. as it is one of the most necessary adjuncts

of the whole business, and cheaper machinery will induce smaller capitalists to come in and build cinemas even in the smallest of villages.

14. I think it will help the Government, the Trade and the people of the country. There are tremendous possibilities in this country and the Cinema can be made use of in various ways to the advantage of the Government.

A demand for educational films does exist and various educational bodies in different parts of the country are interested in it, and I feel sure the public also appreciates such films, but the exhibitors in India do not encourage such films and in most cases absolutely refuse to book them.

15. Not exactly on a very large scale, because one must not forget that the 'key' to the Cinema Industry lies in the theatres. Without more and better theatres the films produced on a large scale will lie idle. Therefore the two questions—producing and theatre building—must be considered together. There are not enough theatres in the country at present which could give adequate returns on a picture in which a considerable amount of money is invested.

There is no doubt however that if a modern studio is established in India and pictures of good quality and suitable nature are turned out, they will create more business. In fact it is most important that such a studio should be established as early as possible, as signs are not lacking that the Indian film is already falling into disfavour and is no longer making the same money as before. I know some exhibitors, who changed over from foreign films to Indian films, are now thinking of coming back to foreign films again. All this is due to the extremely bad quality of Indian films and the producers not knowing how to keep the public interest always on the go.

16. There are absolutely none. A great deal of work will have to be done to create qualified Directors, Actors, Actresses and Scenario Writers. I have seen most of the Indian pictures which were advertised as the *Best* of the bunch and my opinion is that none of their producers really knew what a scenario means. There is no 'direction' of any kind, the story is built up without any cohesion and the major portion of the picture consists of titles. The camera work is of the poorest and I know that not one of them really understands the art of developing and printing.

As regards the Actors, I think the Indians can certainly act but they do not know the differences between the Stage and Screen acting. There is also the difficulty of getting really good looking women to take feminine parts—as without good looks no Actor or Actress can make a success on the screen.

One of the best Indian scenario writers in Bombay asked me only the other day if I could arrange to get some actors and actresses from America, as he thought the Indian actors and actresses were absolutely hopeless.

As stated above, much work will have to be done to 'educate' the Indian actors and actresses and import directors from foreign countries to teach the indigenous workers how it is really done.

There is also another point which must not be overlooked. That no matter how successful an Indian made picture with Indian artists may be, it will never be accepted by any European or American countries. In those markets everything depends upon the 'Stars' and if a picture has unknown artists, even though they may be European or American, it has no chance whatever of being booked by any exhibitor.

Therefore, primarily Indian made pictures will only cater for the Home market. If it is desired to produce a picture which could be sold on the International markets it will have to contain an internationally known Star.

17. I doubt it. India not being an Investors' country, it is most difficult to raise any capital without going to the 'Company Promoters' and professional Directors. With the Government help however, I think, the public may take a keener interest. There is, however, no doubt that people are interested in the Cinema in general and in the production of Indian films in

particular, and if proper safeguards are offered I believe they would be prepared to invest a good bit of their money as well.

18. I do not think any legislative 'action' should be taken, because it may stifle the legitimate growth of the trade by private enterprise. The Government, however, could support the industry by helping it to get the necessary capital by means of loans, etc.

19. Very favourably. But the amount of money which is now being spent on a film produced in India is perhaps one of the main causes why the quality is so low. It will be necessary to spend more in order to get better pictures.

20. (a) Yes. I think such expenditure will be perfectly justifiable because anything that Government can do to help the Cinema Industry in all its branches will be for the benefit of the people of the country. India, as it consists of a major portion of illiterate inhabitants, needs just such help as the Cinema can provide her with. The countless masses cannot be reached by newspapers. The cinema can give them invaluable visual instruction and thus help to lift the whole of the community. To the Government also the cinema offers a priceless means of propaganda—provided of course it is judiciously used.

(b) I should think general revenue should bear this expenditure. But, as I have pointed out, the Government need only *loan* the money, it will not really be an expenditure. The Government, as a matter of fact, can easily make tremendous amount of profit out of it.

21. I think a State Agency will be about the last word, and instead of helping the Industry it will absolutely ruin it. The sponsors of such a proposal apparently forgot that the real reason of the popularity of the cinema is that it provides 'popular' entertainment. No hide-bound or red tape rules can be applied to a business like ours and then imagine that it would improve the Trade.

I am also convinced that a monopoly of this kind will set the manufacturers in other countries up against it, and India will have no chance of securing any first class films except at exceptionally high prices.

The State, however, can and I believe should be indirectly interested in the Industry—not however as monopolist but by giving aid to private enterprises.

#### *Films of the British Commonwealth.*

22. Yes.

(a) I do not think so, as it is not likely that any of those countries would care to take purely Indian films, however good they might be.

(b) Provided the other countries accept Indian films.

(c) I do not see how.

I think a reciprocal policy may be established between each country. For instance they must take one Indian film for every three India takes from them. But it is not likely that the exhibitors in any other countries will book any Indian film unless they contain European or American artists, and therefore it is difficult to see how any such arrangement can assist India until such time of course that India has pictures which may be accepted in those countries.

23. (a) To a very great extent, but utmost care will have to be exercised before such pictures are served to the public—because the public will not willingly pay for a course of education or for anything which savours of a direct propaganda.

(b) Here again the same difficulty lies—that unless the Government has a control over the theatres of the country, no direct measures can be taken in this respect. I am sure no exhibitor in England can be compelled to book an Indian film specifically.

## PART II.

*Social Aspects and Control.*

24. (a) I do not think there are any films exhibited in this country which have a demoralising effect of any kind. Most people who talk on such matters are often the people who never go to the pictures at all, as otherwise they would find that, on the whole, films exhibited in this country are singularly free of any demoralising effects, and in nearly every case provide a wholesome entertainment. If they didn't they would not be so popular.

(b) No.

(c) Sex films are, in my opinion, the only ones which may do a certain amount of harm to all classes of public, and particularly to children and illiterates. I do not, however, believe that such films are in general use in the country. The "adventure" films which the 'kill joys' are pleased to call 'crime films' are absolutely harmless. I have never seen any such pictures in which 'crime' was glorified or policemen were degraded. On the other hand, the 'villians' are always punished and the Police invariably come on top. I have handled several films which were made under the direct supervision of the Commissioner of Police of New York and which in effect were a propaganda on behalf of the Police.

(d) I think the censorship is quite adequate in all cases of films.

(e) I do not.

N.B.—I should like to mention here that the questionnaire contains reference to "crime" films, but asks no information about good films and their effect upon the Public. To say that pictures teach 'crime' is absolutely absurd because in every case all such pictures depict that those who commit crimes are severely *punished*. During the last 20 years the cinema has taught the people of this country many good things. The so-called 'crime' films have shown them the advantages of physical fitness, cleaner living and to hold oneself up against heavy odds. In better class 'social' pictures they see manners and customs which are more refined and which cannot but produce good effect upon the onlooker. In my opinion, the cinema has taught more good things to the people of India than all the 'educational' busy-bodies put together.

25. It does not, except where narrow mindedness is concerned. I do not, of course, advocate that any bad films, whether Western or Indian, should be passed. So long as they are clean films, there is absolutely no necessity whatsoever of any 'special' consideration against either of them.

26. (a) Every care should be taken to cut out all films, whether Western or Eastern, which offend anybody's religious beliefs.

(b) I understand a film called "Moon of Israel" was objected to by the Mohammedans in Northern India. It is however difficult to understand what they took exception to, because the film in question offended the Jews if anything.

27. (a) No Western films, not at any rate those handled by responsible producers, misrepresent Western civilization, nor do they lower anybody in the eyes of the Indians.

It is *not* a fact that films of Western life are unintelligible to an uneducated Indian, or are largely misunderstood by him. I would recommend the Committee to go to any Picture Theatre and sit with these *uneducated* audiences in the gallery and watch them how they appreciate the finer points of highly social Western dramas. I think the cinema-going Indians are quite intelligent people and I have seen them even 20 years ago follow a picture and applaud all good points in it. And to-day the same audience, both educated and uneducated, is even more intelligent as they show their disapproval of a bad picture in no unmistakable manner.

(b) No pictures are made abroad which purposely misrepresent India. Nobody in the Trade, in fact, worries about India in any way. It is however true that what few pictures they do make about India are wrong in practically every detail. I once handled a picture produced in England, which had an Indian story and in which the Director showed that he did not know the difference between a Hindu Temple and Mohammedan Mosque. And the Producer was supposed to have lived in India for years. All this is the result of ignorance, not design.

28. The only class of film which is harmful to children, adolescents and grown-up, in my opinion, is the one that portrays 'Sex' problems of a suggestive type, such as conduct of loose women, and where the story is built up mainly around sordid conditions of any kind.

29. Yes.

30. No.

31. Yes.

33. (a) to (c) Yes.

34. (a) Yes, provided it is situated either in Bombay or Calcutta, that is a Port.

(1) I think Central control is necessary, because at present each Board seem to have their own standards of judging and frequently adopt autocratic methods.

(2) Yes, unless it is situated in a Port of entry.

(3) It should consist of both Officials and Non-Officials and should be under the jurisdiction of the Political Department.

(4) In Bombay.

(b) It is feasible, but censoring must be done only once in any case, as otherwise same trouble will arise as at present.

(c) The Local Boards should simply report to the Central Board their opinion on any picture that they find fault with, or their opinion about the films in general, and the Central Board should be guided by it when certifying films. Local Boards should not be empowered to stop any film.

(d) From the fees which are at present levied and from the Income-tax paid by the Trade to the Government. The present method of charging fees, however, should be readjusted as it is not fair and many Boards take undue advantage of it.

35. (a) More or less it is.

(b) Yes. And there should be a European to censor foreign films and an Indian to censor Indian films.

36. (a) Yes, with its limitations.

(b) Not necessarily.

To the second part of this question, I regret, I cannot give an answer as I do not know what a 'gentleman' in India would consider a reasonable remuneration.

37. (a) I believe so.

(b) The only safeguard needed is to prevent the Local Boards from adopting arrogant attitude.

38. Many films have been so treated, but I do not think there was anything objectionable in them. In most cases it is simply a question of Local Boards adopting an unreasonable attitude and sticking to it.

39. No.

There have been some pictures which were banned locally in some places in England, but not universally for the whole of the country.

There was also a picture which was not shown in England at all but was shown here, but the film in question was not stopped by the Censors but was boycotted by the Trade itself owing to certain advertising stunt adopted by a foreign Company.

40. No necessity whatsoever.

I have never noticed any objectionable advertisements. I cannot, however, say anything about the vernacular Press.

41. Yes. Tremendous improvement. The foreign films now being made are 100 per cent. better than what they were a few years ago.

42. It is most necessary. The Censors should not only co-operate with the trade but should give every assistance to the importers by telling them exactly what is and what is not required. The present system is utterly unbusiness like. The trade is simply told in a curt manner that a certain film cannot be passed, and there the matter ends. The Members of the Board refuse to discuss the merits or demerits of a film, or even disclose what they object to.

The Censor Board, whether Local or Central, should work *with* the Industry, not against it.

43. (a) I do not think so. Even if a bad or undesirable picture is imported, the Censors should see to it that it is not passed, and the Importer is bound to stop bringing out such films or go out of business eventually.

44. The public can assist by patronising good films and the Press by giving correct and unbiased criticisms. The Press, I am sorry to say, does not do so at present, and although it reaps a great harvest from the Trade in the shape of advertisements it does *nothing* to assist it.

45. (a) Yes.

To begin with the stories should be censored before they are produced.

Proper control should be kept over the studios by the Fire Department.

Beyond this I do not think anything else is necessary.

(b) Yes, I think it may be advisable to do so.

### Oral Evidence of Mr. ALEX. HAGUE, Sole Proprietor, Pathé-India, on Thursday, the 17th November 1927.

*Chairman:* You are the proprietor of the Pathé Film Co.?

A. Yes.

Q. You have had considerable experience in this line and you have travelled far and wide?

A. I started the business in the country.

Q. Do you reside in Bombay?

A. I stay both in Bombay and Calcutta.

Q. Are you the sole proprietor of Pathes?

A. Yes.

Q. Is it an agency?

A. I own the business in this country, but it means really an agency for Pathes as well as for other films, but I am independent of the firm on the other side. I can deal in any films I like besides Pathes's. I am not confined to Pathes. I pick up the best pictures anywhere I find them whether on the continent, England or America, besides what Pathes give me.

Q. What do you do for picking up pictures?

A. I go myself and pick up as many as possible. Sometimes a few pictures come out which I cannot always see in advance.

Q. You import very few pictures without knowing what they are and their quality?

A. Yes.

Q. There is no blind booking so far as you are concerned?

A. I do not purchase anything blind myself, nor do I sell in that manner.

Q. Is there any blind booking here?

A. The market in India is so small that it does not interest the big manufacturers to sell blindly. He would much rather sell a picture hereafter it has been shown in other places and after finding out how it has done so that he might get a good price for it. In America very often the manufacturers sell their pictures before they are made, that is called blind booking.

Q. Is there any blind booking now in India?

A. I should think not.

Q. Who are the chief importers?

A. Madans, the Universal Picture Corporation and myself. Universals have their own branch here. There are also one or two small firms who import films.

Q. Do Madans resort to blind booking?

A. Yes, they do but I do not think they buy any picture before it is made.

Q. Although you think there is no necessity for it?

A. If they put their foot down there is no necessity for it, but they seem to prefer it. They prefer to buy without seeing the films.

Q. What is the advantage to them?

A. By buying without seeing they get the films at a cheaper price.

Q. How do they choose their pictures?

A. They select a picture by reading about it in the Trade Papers, and then buy it.

Q. You say most films are about 18 months behind and Madans too are 18 months behind?

A. Yes. The only two other firms who are prominent in the trade are the Paramount and the Metro Goldwyn, and their pictures are also fully two years behind.

Q. Then what is the necessity for blind booking?

A. None. The Paramount people have got two men here and I believe they wouldnt mind showing their pictures before selling them, as they will get better prices that way and return what is not good. In every case the exhibitors prefer to buy blind.

Q. But it is not blind in the true sense. They know that it is already screened in other countries?

A. Quite so. When a manufacturer is selling pictures already released in other countries, you cannot call that blind booking, because the buyer or importer has opportunities of knowing how they have done elsewhere. Although a picture which has done well in other countries may not do good business here or may even prove quite unsuitable. Blind booking as it is known in England and America is not known in India.

Q. And what about block booking?

A. It means the same thing. You book a block of 52 pictures from one manufacturer and have to take all of this, whether good or bad, but a showman need not show a bad picture even though he pays for it.

Q. So blind booking or block booking in the true sense does not exist in India?

A. It does exist in a way but with this difference that the buyer here has an opportunity of knowing how the picture has fared elsewhere.

Mr. Green: You mean without previewing they buy?

A. Yes. Madans, for instance, very often buy that way. The system works alright in respect of big films, such as 'Ben Hur' which is a very expensive production and was released two years before it came out here. My firm is quite up to date in regard to the pictures coming out here,

as we release pictures here practically simultaneously with American and English markets. In every other case they are nearly 18 months behind.

Q. So far as Western films are concerned India is not a field for key theatres?

A. No. India is such a small country that the big manufacturers do not worry about it at all. I have been buying from Pathes for the last seven years on a negative cost basis, and India contributes from  $\frac{1}{3}$  to  $\frac{2}{3}$  per cent. only of the cost of the negative.

Q. Now, do you believe the statement that films are specially manufactured in America for oriental consumption?

A. No. But all the big manufacturers in America now realise that foreign markets are growing and in some cases as much as 65 per cent. of their negative cost comes from outside the United States. Therefore they are anxious to study all the markets of the world and find out what is required for each country and give that country the kind of pictures most suitable for it. I always keep my firm informed of what is going on here, and they keep asking me, for instance, about this committee, as also what the Censors want and what is good for the country and what is not, etc., so that before a picture leaves America they may put it right and remove all objectionable things in it. But certainly there are no films specially made for India, because it would not cover the cost. The least cost of a negative to a big manufacturer comes to about 250,000 dollars which is roughly 7 lakhs of rupees. Therefore they would not think of making a picture for India alone.

Q. I suppose these importers like Madans and others keep themselves in touch with the productions appearing in the periodical magazines?

A. Yes, we give them advance information months ahead, even before the pictures are produced. They are kept informed of what is going on at the studios. They know practically what is going to happen a year hence. In our trade everything depends upon good advertising by the manufacturer to the exhibitor and the exhibitor to the public. Sometime an exhibitor buys a series of films featuring a particular star, who is well-known and liked by the public. You might call that blind booking, but the exhibitor knows that the income on pictures, with well-known stars in them, goes up and therefore he buys such pictures even at double the price and without looking at them in advance.

Q. Are these pictures shown beforehand in the city before they are distributed in the mofussil districts?

A. Practically 99 per cent. of the pictures produced by big Companies and shown in the mofussil are those which are already shown in the cities, because by showing them in the key towns like Bombay and Calcutta you can get better rentals from the mofussil districts. This gives the pictures a good advertisement and the exhibitors themselves take their cue from it. In the case of the smaller importers their pictures are never shown in Bombay or Calcutta. They bring out cheaper varieties which do not get a booking in big towns.

Q. Are they second-hand films?

A. Yes, some of them.

Chairman: How many such firms are there which import cheap films, what is the percentage?

A. I think about 25 per cent. They are pictures produced by smaller Companies with stars who are not known, and the prices are naturally cheaper. You can get them for about 75 dollars royalty from America.

Q. So far as the moral tone is concerned, how do they compare? Are they different?

A. Sometimes they are, because in America it is the small manufacturer or the outsider who comes in and makes a picture on the sex line, just touching the border line, so as to attract people to it. Sometimes he runs away



with it. Such pictures make money because of the suggestive manner in which they are produced.

Q. Do they go through censorship such as it exists in America?

A. Yes, but the country is so big that it is not always possible to stop particular films.

Q. Is there any possibility of the leakage of morally low films in that way?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you seen them yourself here?

A. I have not come across any in the big towns, but I do know that pictures like that exist.

Q. In America itself they would not show them, and they certainly have no chance of showing them in England?

A. No.

Q. Have you seen any such pictures you have in mind exhibited in India?

A. I cannot exactly give you the names. I know one or two pictures, it was a long time ago. The cost of production of such pictures would probably be \$15,000 to \$20,000. There were some pictures of this kind which the big showmen themselves boycotted in America. Literature dealing with such pictures may come through, as there is nothing to stop it. I don't think they can get through the Indian censorship though they are pictures just within the border line.

Q. From your knowledge of India has the cinema, as it is exhibited here, any baneful effect on the public?

A. Not at all. The showmen here do recognise their responsibility as citizens of India and are not inclined to show bad pictures, though perhaps there may be few exceptions. In some countries there are exhibitors who are really very bad men themselves and they do sometimes try to show such pictures to the public in order to make money quickly.

Q. Who are the showmen here, are they Hindus or Muhammadans?

A. They are mostly Parsees in Bombay; in up-country the trade is divided between Hindus and Muhammadans, and down South we have Christians and Hindus between whom the business is divided.

Q. I suppose the trade itself exercises some sort of restraint in this matter, is it not?

A. I have not come across any exhibitor who is out to show that kind of pictures.

Q. You have not got people who are merely bent upon showing the under-world life?

A. There are such people, but not in our country.

Q. You believe there is a great possibility for the Indian film industry in this country, do you not?

A. Tremendous possibility. If good Indian films are made, it will mean big business.

Q. You need not aim at the perfection which prevails in America?

A. It depends upon what you are portraying. You can produce pictures of big Durbars on the same scale as in America and as perfectly. Ordinary social pictures need not, of course, be made elaborately. Big pictures will find a good market both in India and outside.

Q. But for encouraging the Indian film industry so as to produce films which would appeal to the ordinary people, I don't think you need such elaborate arrangements?

A. A purely Indian picture will never appeal outside India unless you make it up to the standard of the American pictures. It is not a very difficult matter, and you can get business all over the world.

Q. To which would you attach greater importance, is it to the pictures which would appeal to the ordinary masses or to better class pictures?

A. You will have to have both. If I were to start production, and I am thinking of starting it shortly, I should produce a number of pictures for local consumption only which would not cost me much and which would bring in enough returns. I would then undertake to produce big films, perhaps one or two a year, and make big money with them outside India. You will have to attempt to produce both the ordinary and the big pictures which would appeal to better classes as well as to the masses.

Q. Have you any idea about a studio which would increase the production of the country and at the same time serve the international market? What would be the cost of a studio like that?

A. That, of course, would depend on the size of the studio, but it should not cost very much to put up one. About 5 lakhs of rupees. It will enable you to turn out even big pictures. Because don't forget most of the scenes for the big pictures may be laid outdoors. The indoor scenes are only a matter of a big hall. All you need is plenty of space outside.

Q. Do you agree that in order to train the Indians, the sort of people who are likely to prosper in the trade, either as cameramen or as Electricians or Directors, do you believe that they may be sent outside the country for training?

A. Well, I doubt if they can get the instruction. I don't suppose they will teach them the work. It will be very hard. Besides, if they learn the art at the other end and come back here, they will probably be unable to do anything here at all. It will teach them something different to what they will be required to portray in their own country.

Q. Suppose you find intelligent lads and lasses who are already in the line?

A. How can they learn if they cannot actually play or work in the pictures that are being made there. If you just stand by and look on, that won't teach anything. Therefore, you have got to bring here the men who know the technical side of it.

Q. You are more for bringing out experts?

A. Oh! absolutely—and teach local people on the spot. Then if they have got the brains they should be able to evolve their own methods.

Q. We have been told that we can get good experts from Germany and from elsewhere?

A. It depends on what kind of experts you mean.

Q. Directors?

A. I don't think a Director will be of any use to you from Germany. Electricians might be, as also Cameramen. In photography they are quite well up and in lighting too. Not in directing. You will have to go to America for that. That is where America has gone ahead. Much of the electric equipment, even at Hollywood, is imported from Germany. It is the direction and scenario writing that has got them ahead.

Q. What would you advise to be done with regard to good stories and scenario writers?

A. It is a very elaborate affair as they do it in America. Take a book or a story. When it arrives there, they have a number of readers who are educated men with university qualifications, perhaps prominent writers themselves, it is sent to a dozen or so of these readers who read them and give their opinion on them. Upon that recommendation the story is bought and it then goes to the head of the scenario department whose duty it is to see that it is turned into a good picture story. The scenario department then gives it to some of their men and has a scenario prepared. It then goes back to the head of the scenario department who, after approval, forwards it to the head of the producing department. There the head calls half a dozen directors and gives them the story and asks them to go home and see which of them thinks it would suit their

temperament and each one of these directors offers their suggestions as to the way the picture should be produced. A director is then selected who, in conjunction with the business department, works out the cost of the sets and the backgrounds, etc., required to make the picture. The business department sees to it that the Director does not spend too much money and often lays down a definite schedule in advance, for instance, that the cost should not exceed \$200,000 and so on. Then it goes to the casting department where they have to collect the actors and actresses most suitable for the parts. Then they appoint a supervisor to look after the whole thing. When the picture is ready it still goes through various departments, such as negative cutting department and assembling department. Special experts are employed to write the titles and a great deal of cutting and joining is done before it is served to the public finally. In some cases, parts of the picture are produced all over again.

Q. Of course, we have not got all that here. What would you advise to improve the position here consistently with our position?

A. First of all, of course, you must have studios with modern equipment and you must get good writers, men who know something about the country, the life and that kind of thing. And get a man to teach the people the technical side of the whole thing.

Q. Teach the man himself? Do you think you will have to get out an expert for that?

A. Well, you could get to know that even from the books, how a scenario is written. There is a good deal of literature about that. But there is another point—the scenario writers have to be in touch with the directors. Take our business here. We cable the condition of the business in this market every week, and this information goes right back to the producing department. The scenario department is informed how a particular picture gets along, how the public are receiving it and so on. A scenario writer must write with the object of pleasing the public, not a highbrow kind of a story which might please the writer himself but nobody else. So you see you must make a picture that will appeal to the public, otherwise you won't get any money on it. All that can be done, but it means a lot of work and a great deal of trouble and money as well.

Q. I am rather distressed to see in your answer to 16 that no talent of any kind is available in the country?

A. Quite. I don't think there is anybody who can write a story. You see they send me stories every now and then. They think we produce in this country. I get stories and I assure you they are the most awful things you have ever read.

Q. I am now reminding you of it in order to find out if you can suggest anything to improve the state of things?

A. By bringing people in here.

Q. People to train the talent?

A. That is so. If I start off here I would not start with any local help.

Q. I suppose you recognise the difficulty that a man coming out from abroad won't know the taste of the people of the country?

A. Oh! yes, but he would work with somebody who knows the conditions at this end.

Q. Then it must be a combination?

A. Absolutely.

Q. In order to make the producing industry successful, there must be a combination of effort both on the technical side and on the literary side?

A. Certainly.

Q. Without that the Indian industry cannot progress? Now you say that there is a monopolistic attitude adopted in the distribution?

A. In the exhibition.

Q. By certain exhibitors?

A. Yes. But not in distribution.

Q. Never mind. You have put it under the head "distribution" and also "exhibition"?

A. Well, as I said, if any particular group of exhibitors get hold of all the theatres, they naturally will get hold of the supplies as well.

Q. Well, what do you suggest? Take for instance the fact that you have 350 theatres in this country.

A. Build more theatres. That is the main point. You have got to start there.

Q. You think there is the capital?

A. Up to date there are only 350 theatres in India, which is nothing. What we need is 3,000 theatres straight away.

Q. You say you would go in for 3,000 theatres straight away?

A. More than that.

Q. Without any effort on the side of production?

A. That will come in. There are enough pictures available. I am not talking about the locally made pictures. You can bring them on. But you must build theatres all over the country. Once you have got the theatres established, the production can follow. If you start off with production and bring out two or three hundred pictures per year, there will be no theatres to show them in and you won't get enough returns on them. The industry in America has gone up because big towns in America, like New York, Chicago, etc., have put up theatres costing millions of pounds and the result is that these theatres have attracted a better class of people and raised the quality of pictures, as such theatres cannot exist if they show ordinary films. They have uplifted the whole tone of the industry. Because they are in need of big films. Producers are spending ten times as much on films to-day as they did previously. It is the theatres that have brought the business to what it is to-day.

Q. I agree with you. But surely you don't advise the putting up of big theatres in our country? The country cannot afford it.

A. No, no. In big towns theatres seating say 1,000. Outside, small theatres to seat 500 or so.

Q. You think there is a strong tendency for exhibitors to acquire a monopolistic attitude?

A. Oh! yes, I think there is.

Q. Do you approve of the quota system for increasing the Indian industry?

A. No. You see it is a most extraordinary thing. I have read several people's evidence here on that question. The Indian film is to-day, as a matter of fact, playing 100 per cent. in the majority of the theatres of the country.

Q. Are you thinking of the city of Bombay?

A. Yes—for instance the Majestic and the Imperial cinemas.

Q. But we have just heard from Poona that hardly any Indian film is shown there.

A. In the Indian quarters there are four cinemas and they do show Indian films. Perhaps Indian films are not liked there.

Q. Here in Bombay you are quite right that in some of the theatres nearly 100 per cent. is Indian.

A. And the theatres up-country too show Indian films in preference to foreign films. When the Indian film is going like that, it does not need any quota. All it needs is better quality and more theatres in the country.

Q. But we were given the advice the other day that the import of foreign films is progressing at a much larger rate than the production of Indian films.

A. That is due to the Indian producers. The producers in India have been making consistently worse pictures every time they make them. I think every other picture that they bring out there is something worse in it than in the previous one. The public naturally gets tired of such a thing. In Bombay, for instance, if a thousand people went to see the first Indian film, the second picture attracted only 800 and so on. On the other hand, if you were making better pictures in India and if every subsequent picture was an improvement on the last, the attendance would increase. I know at the present moment, although the Indian film is still popular because the class of people it appeals to are numerous, there is no doubt about it that the better educated Indians have left off going to the Indian films, which they would not have done if the quality of the Indian film had been kept up.

Q. Are the better class of Indians you have in mind, are they a sufficient quantity to be taken note of by the producer?

A. In a business like the cinema it is necessary to take into consideration every class you cater for. The higher class is very small but when they come they pay Rs. 2. We cannot afford to miss any of that.

Q. Now, I thought you said just a little while ago that you yourself were thinking of going into the producing line.

A. I have been thinking of it, as a matter of fact, for a long time but have not yet gone into it, as I have been waiting until a sufficient number of theatres exist in the country. You see I don't want to undertake the production of pictures until I am assured of good returns on them. What these people are doing is to make a picture for Rs. 10,000 or so and then practically go round all over the country begging for business. I want big business and will start off on a big scale when time comes. With more theatres the pictures will make more profit which could be reinvested for better productions.

Q. You don't think 350 theatres now existing sufficient?

A. Not at all.

Q. What is the least number you would have?

A. Well, I should think at least 1,500 theatres all over the country are necessary, out of which 500 should be devoted entirely to Indian films. Then you would have a chance of doing something really big and profitable. To-day there are some 60 or 70 theatres showing imported films, a hundred purely Indian films and 60 mixed films and the rest come in and go out, which is not a large circuit by any means.

Q. So that for any new venture to succeed there must be a combination not only of the talent and knowledge of the West and the East but also there must be a combination between the person who builds the theatres and the producers?

A. Absolutely. That is the most important thing. Every big producer in America controls a chain of theatres, as producers cannot exist to-day unless they have control over the theatres. In fact, all big organisations are practically producing, distributing and exhibiting concerns all combined in one.

Q. Do you expect the theatres to spring up of their own accord?

A. It depends. New theatres are coming in at a slow rate, but a big effort is necessary to create a bigger and better chain of houses. The time must come when the exhibitors may turn against a producer or the distributor. Therefore the producer always makes a point of controlling the theatres.

Q. So that part of the finance will go to help to build up the theatres?

A. Yes, You must have a control over the theatres if you are going to produce and have your films shown there.

Q. Now, are foreign pictures cheap for the exhibitor as compared with Indian pictures?

A. No, as far as I know the foreign pictures are being hired at a bigger price than the Indian film and yet the gross on the foreign film is not as large as on the Indian film. That is why I say there is no necessity for protection at all. They talk about enhanced Duty on imported films. It is absolutely silly. You take the pictures they produce here. They put Rs. 10,000 in it. They probably get at a Rs. 20,000 return on it. Whereas a foreign picture which costs Rs. 2,500 would not make more than Rs. 5,000 at the outside.

Q. Here you say "monopoly is harmful and must ultimately destroy the enterprise."

A. It acts harmfully in every way. It will monopolise the import. It may keep out the good pictures.

Q. When you say "enterprise" you mean foreign pictures?

A. Everything. You make a local picture. If the particular party, who has the monopoly of theatres, turns round and says we don't want it, you will have no outlet for it; or he may offer a certain price which may be below cost.

Q. You speak of buying cheap pictures. Is there a tendency to buy cheaper pictures in India?

A. Not exactly. But what happens is this that up-country very many more films are required every week and therefore cheaper pictures get in between the better ones to fill up the up-country demand. I also know some of the largest exhibitors buy cheap films specially for up-country stations and do not book or show better films there which they do in bigger towns. Personally I don't approve of it at all, because to my mind it spoils the business of the exhibitor. If he has got good pictures, why not show them in the small theatres as well?

Q. That is a sound business proposition I quite agree. But very few people in our country have the foresight to see it. Do you think that the Government should establish a studio of their own?

A. I think so, although personally I would prefer that it should be done by private enterprise, so as to keep the business open. But if it came to the push, the Government should establish a studio.

Q. What would be the cost incurred if they established a studio of the kind you have in mind.

A. Well, you see in a studio in this country you have got to have a special developing and printing plant. And that plant requires a refrigerating system, because it is very very necessary that the films should be developed at 65 degrees of temperature. Well, to instal such a plant will run away with a good bit of money and it will also mean an extra recurring charge all the time. And that is the only big cost. The rest of it, all you want is plenty of ground space—which is quite cheap in India—and then two or three closed studios. Because don't forget that nowadays sunlight is not used for the best pictures at all. In America they went out to California to establish the film industry there because of the sun in California. Well, to-day not one studio in Hollywood uses sunlight. Every studio works with artificial light except for outdoor scenes. You will require a good many special lamps with very powerful lights. And once you have done that, the expense is finished.

Roughly the studio that I have in mind to start should not cost more than 5 lakhs of rupees; and the recurring cost depends upon what number of pictures you produce.

Q. Now, you say here "I know some exhibitors who changed over from foreign films to Indian films are now thinking of coming back to foreign films again." Where is this? In Bombay?

A. Yes.

Q. Although Indian pictures are getting more and more popular, we were told?

A. The trouble is there are not enough of them and a major portion of what is available is bad.

Q. You mean the production does not keep pace with the demand. If they can get them they will always take them?

A. Yes.

Q. Now, do you think that there is any reasonably large demand for good Indian pictures abroad?

A. No, none whatever. As I told you, unless you have the foreign stars you can never expect that.

Q. I suppose the foreign market may one day take them?

A. You will have to make pictures specially for the foreign market and they should be of the same quality as their own. And you must give them a picture of India as they imagine it. Gorgeous, rich Nabobs, the Mysterious East, etc.

Q. A picture like Miss Mayo's book won't appeal to them?

A. I have not read the book.

Q. You say in 12 as regards Imperial preference, they must have one Indian film for every three India takes from them.

A. Because you cannot expect them to take more at present. You can only exchange at present pictures which are specially made for those markets or scenic or educational pictures.

Q. What is the value to India of such bargain?

A. As propaganda only.

Q. Not these dramatic pictures or anything like that?

A. No.

Mr. Green: You mean just as a start and improve the proportion later?

A. Yes.

Chairman: Anyway, do you think Indian opinion will tolerate such an agreement?

A. Well, I don't think they understand about the cinema business at all.

Q. But still we have to be guided by that, such as it is.

A. It is a business proposition, not a sentimental one.

Q. Do you think the censorship is adequate as it is?

A. I think so.

Q. Don't you think it would be better that the film should be seen by two members?

A. It will only entail more work and more worry for everybody.

Q. Do you think that every film should be seen by at least two members of the board?

A. I don't think so.

Q. Don't you think it will remove much of this vague complaint?

A. I don't think the public have complained.

Q. Here we have heard very loud complaints. Since we have been here.

A. But don't you see a paid man, an Inspector, comes and sees the picture. The importer is satisfied with it. He gives it to the exhibitor who accepts it. The exhibitor presents it to the public, and the public says nothing. Therefore, I think there is nothing wrong with the censorship if everything ends satisfactorily. If anything does occur, naturally we take immediate action to please the public. If there is anything objectionable in a picture the public will always protest.

Q. You are assuming there is an intelligent vocal public.

A. Well, I think if the public find something, the public ought to complain. If the public does not complain, why meet the trouble half way?

Q. You think the question itself is meeting the trouble half way?

A. Leave it alone.

Q. You have been in the industry so long—have you heard complaints of this sort before this committee came into existence?—complaints about the loose censorship or anything? From the Bombay public?

A. No. On the contrary, I frequently get letters appreciating the pictures and asking me to forward them to the stars.

Q. From the Indian public?

A. Yes. You will be surprised to know that every mail boat from India takes packets of letters to Hollywood appreciating the stars.

Q. Probably it may not be correct to infer from it that there is no complaint about it?

A. Why create any trouble. After all, it is the public you are thinking of.

Q. Do you think, from your knowledge of the thing, because you are keeping an eye on it, there is any serious laxity of censorship?

A. No.

Q. To call for any measure either in the standard of censorship or the machinery of censorship?

A. I do not think so. There was a particular picture of my own, which was passed and shown in Bombay. I received complaints from the exhibitor, that some people grumbled about certain scenes. As soon as I got to know about it, I removed the scenes from the film altogether and there was nothing further heard about it. We keep an eye on what the public wants and take every precaution that there should be no complaints.

Q. You have heard of the Social Hygiene Delegation. They came here and when they left Bombay they left a big, thundering indictment against the cinema.

A. Yes.

Q. Did you come in contact with that lady?

A. Yes. She brought a letter of introduction to me to give her every possible help. I did it and when she went away she left this thing. It is very bad taste.

Q. Did she or the other gentleman have any discussion on these social evils which they depict?

A. She made this statement when she was leaving.

Q. Did she have a discussion with you on the subject?

A. No, none at all.

Q. Neither of them?

A. No. I thought it was very extraordinary to say a thing like that. Which film they were referring to I do not know.

Mr. Green: She is talking definitely about films prohibited in England and shown in India.

A. At the moment I thought of writing to her with a view to ask her to let us know which film she was referring to.

Chairman: This creates a lot of impression abroad and one of the main reasons why this committee has come into existence is this sort of complaint, I may tell you.

A. When a lady comes to this country for the first time in her life and after a few weeks she makes this complaint, it is incomprehensible.

Q. You do not think there is anything there.

A. No. If she had mentioned the particular films there would have been something to go upon.

Q. You do not think then that cinema has had any baneful influence? I am concerned more with that because even some responsible Indians have



come before us and told us it has a baneful influence on the Indian public. I am much concerned about it and if that is so, we should do something to remedy it.

A. I do not think so.

Q. You believe in assistance from abroad, and yet in answer to question No. 27, you give us an instance where a director did not know the difference between a Hindu temple and a Muhammadan mosque.

A. Yes.

Q. It is not unique. A gentleman who said he had been 30 years in Bombay travelled with me in a first class compartment and he asked me whether I was a Muhammadan (Laughter).

Do you believe that this advertising stunt is practised in the trade?

A. No.

Q. What is it you refer to in answer to question No. 39. You say "There was also a picture which was not shown in England at all, but was shown here".

A. It was not stopped by the Board of Censors but was boycotted by the trade itself owing to a certain advertising stunt adopted by a foreign company in England. The picture is still under a ban.

Mr. Green: You have given us a complete statement and the Chairman has asked you so much that I have not got very many questions to ask you. If I may start from the end, though the Board is rather curt with you, on the whole you are satisfied with the work they do?

A. Yes.

Q. I take it that you are aware of the statutory rules under which the Board works?

A. Yes.

Q. And you are aware it is part of the duty of the Board as laid down in those rules, to hear at their meetings any representations from Importers or their authorised agents or from members of the public?

A. Yes.

Q. We both know that you have on one occasion appeared before the Board.

A. Yes. I want a little more co-operation.

Q. There is nothing in the constitution of the Board as it is at present?

A. Nothing.

Q. May I put it a little differently. Supposing the Board were increased in number very largely, we have it suggested by some gentlemen that the Board should consist of 20 or 40 or even a 100 men if necessary, in order that panels might be formed for the examination of films. Could the trade work more amicably or more conveniently with a large Board than with a small one?

A. It will entail more expense for nothing.

Q. I will put it slightly more differently. It is suggested that more interests ought to be represented on the Board of Censors, Vigilance Societies and even trade interests. First of all I would ask you, do you think it is possible to collect a sufficient panel of gentlemen of sufficient leisure?

A. I do not.

Q. Of sufficient position. Assuming there are plenty of gentlemen who are capable of doing that work, have you got in Bombay gentlemen of sufficient leisure to do the work in addition to their ordinary avocations?

A. I do not think so.

Q. According to the latest statistics three hours a day is necessary to examine the films certified in Bombay alone. I take it we may anticipate that that will increase?

A. Yes.

Q. It has increased for the past year. Your considered opinion is you could not get gentlemen who would do that. You said you could not commit yourself as to what reasonable remuneration would be.

A. I could not answer that question.

Q. One gentleman suggested Rs. 75 a week, would that be a reasonable remuneration?

A. I think it will be a waste of money really.

Q. Who would have to pay the money?

A. That is the point. I am perfectly sure the trade cannot.

Q. Do I understand you correctly to say, though you are satisfied, generally speaking, with the present censorship, in one of your answers I think you say you would prefer a whole-time censor with an advisory board.

A. Yes. That is what you have now, a whole-time censor.

Q. You mean, counting the stipendiary staff as censors?

A. Yes, the Inspector.

Q. It has been represented very strongly to us that it is very dangerous to rely on the judgment of one man and one man only. Passing film after film his sense may get blunted through no fault of his own, and it is not urged that he is not acting *bona fide*. Do you think yourself that it would be advisable to have two men instead of one?

A. Yes. I see pictures myself a couple of hours every day.

Q. You censor them yourself before you put them before the Board?

A. Yes. I always do it.

Q. So as to make sure as far as it lies in your power that it is not objectionable?

A. Yes, and to remove things which I think may be objected to.

Q. Do you think there is much to cut out?

A. Not much, but occasionally I do find some.

Q. May I ask you what kind of things you cut out?

A. I generally cut out scenes of brutality, drunken men trying to force their attentions on a girl and things like that.

Q. I take it you follow fairly closely the rules that the censor tries to follow?

A. Yes. That is why I want the Board to tell us beforehand what sort of things should be removed, so that we could excise them ourselves and save a lot of trouble to them.

Q. On the whole you like the idea of a Central Board?

A. Yes.

Q. But even if you have a Central Board, would it not be necessary to reserve power to local authorities to suspend a film?

A. I thought the local authorities must not do so when you have the Central Board. Otherwise it will come down to the same thing over again.

Q. Is it not possible that a picture which might be innocuous in Bombay might cause a riot in Hyderabad, Sind?

A. Yes. In a case like that I would not mind if the picture was stopped locally.

Chairman: We are talking of emergency powers.

A. Yes, but a picture that is passed in Calcutta should not be stopped in Bombay and vice versa.

Mr. Green: If we recommend a Central Board you suggest that it should be at a port either Calcutta or Bombay. You prefer Bombay?

A. Yes.

*Q.* Supposing we decide that it will be better to have it in Calcutta, you will not still hanker after a provincial board?

*A.* I think it will not be very good for the trade, because most of it is in Bombay and Bombay is a nearer port.

*Q.* A greater proportion of imports come through Bombay?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* I think you are right as a matter of fact.

*A.* The pictures must first come to Bombay and then go across to Calcutta. My Head Office was in Calcutta before, but I came down to Bombay afterwards. It saves a lot of money in freight, etc.....

*Q.* Do you import mostly from America?

*A.* Yes. And from France and England too.

*Q.* You find Bombay most convenient?

*A.* Yes. It is the best centre for distribution all over India.

*Colonel Crawford:* I have read your interesting note. You press for a free market for foreign films in India?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* An open market for the films of any country outside India to come here?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Is there any tendency towards monopolisation on the part of any one country at present in India?

*A.* No.

*Q.* The market is perfectly free for foreign films?

*A.* Yes.

*Chairman:* The door is open, only you do not enter.

*Colonel Crawford:* You have given us some idea of the taste of the Indian market in your very full note. Do you think that sex films make any favourable appeal to the Indian people?

*A.* They must appeal to some.

*Q.* It makes a general appeal to humanity as a whole?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Do you think that a lot of Western films produced to-day or a major portion of them do make an undue sexual appeal?

*A.* No. Very few. There are some which are purposely made that way, but in others although something may be put in, in order to make the story attractive, the idea of sex appeal is not there and therefore such films are harmless.

*Q.* You do not think that in the case of kissing scenes there has been a tendency recently to develop a sort of sensual kiss?

*A.* It all depends upon the way in which kisses are portrayed.

*Q.* Is there a tendency nowadays to portray a kiss—not only a kiss on the mouth but on the neck, on the arms, in a sensual way?

*A.* I do not think there is any tendency in that direction, not in the better class pictures at any rate.

*Q.* You are distributor. Do you have to take any steps to watch the box office returns in the mofussil?

*A.* I do where I hire the picture on a sharing basis.

*Q.* I am thinking of the Indian producer. How is he to know to-day what he is going to get in the way of return from the mofussil theatre?

*A.* All over the place where I send out pictures on a sharing basis I look after the box office returns. I send a man who goes continually round all over the country with the particular picture, except where I have reasons to believe that the exhibitor is perfectly honest. We have a very elaborate

system and can always tell in advance what amount a picture will gross the moment, of course, we see the film.

Q. You are concerned also in watching your return from the exhibitor?

A. Yes.

Q. Has the Indian producer any distributing agency to-day?

A. I suggested to some of them that I would distribute for them, but they would not allow it.

Q. What sort of share of the profits would you require as distributors? If it is a secret I would not press you.

A. It is not a secret. It is an established custom all over the world. It starts from, say, 40 per cent. of the gross income to the distributor and 60 per cent. to the producer. In some cases the distributor gets 50 per cent. and producer 50 per cent. The distributor, of course, pays all the overhead expenses of distribution and frequently advances money to the producer. Similar method is adopted in hiring films to the exhibitor, where the distributor gets 40 per cent. and the exhibitor 60 per cent. The distributor charges his commission on this 40 per cent. which he gets from the exhibitor and pays the balance to the producer.

Mr. Green: Of the gross takings?

A. Yes. After deducting the tax, of course. We take 40 and the theatre takes 60. In some cases we may come down to 25 per cent.

Q. Do you think the Indian industry will benefit a great deal from a distributing agency?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think that there is any big import of cheap or old films from America in this country?

A. No, not much.

Q. There is a certain amount?

A. Not from America. Amongst the big manufacturers the pictures are not sold. You cannot buy a picture to-day from America. For example, the pictures which come to me I have got to account for them and return them to the producers or burn them when done with. I cannot sell them. You cannot buy from America, but you can buy from the London market a lot of continental junk.

Chairman: Where do those continental things come from?

A. Germany, France. They are exported from London.

Colonel Crawford: How do you purchase your films for this country? You do a certain amount of inspection yourself by going to Europe?

A. Yes.

Q. Is there any other method?

A. In some cases I get on "exploitation." Then firm sends out the films and leaves to us to judge whether the picture is good enough for the market. If it is good for the market I keep it, if not I return it. In the case of those pictures which I accept we get a certain percentage in exactly the same manner as we do in the case of the theatres. In this way I have a chance of seeing the picture before I offer them to my exhibitors, and if any are not good I do not offer them at all. I simply return them.

Q. Do you keep any agents yourself in the market at Home to advise you?

A. Yes, both in London and New York. I keep an eye on all the outside markets and I employ men.

Mr. Green: You would be prepared to distribute Indian films?

A. Yes.

Q. Can you tell me anything about educational films? Do you import any educational films?

A. I import some. I have also a picture called "The Pictorial" which consists of scientific and educational subjects, but we have not been able to do any business with it.

Q. Did you try to import any of these natural history films?

A. That is the kind of subject which is put in "The Pictorial." But the exhibitor does not want it. The public I think likes it.

Q. But the exhibitor at present is not convinced of that?

A. No.

Q. For the preparation of educational films, do you consider that it would be good to have a model studio run by Government for the production of its own educational films, and acting as a sort of research department for the industry?

A. Yes.

Q. You think that would be advantageous?

A. Yes. It would help both the Government and the industry.

Q. Is there any scope for research work regarding the industry in India?

A. Yes.

Q. In all ways?

A. You do not need to start from the very bottom because experiments have already been made. It is not necessary to start in a small way either. You can turn out a picture here quite as well as anybody else, can do in other parts of the world.

Q. But there are conditions peculiar to India?

A. Yes. I do not know what Government really wants, but if it is a question of propaganda work—on the railways, this propaganda is already being carried on,—you must make these pictures in a manner that will be acceptable to people. You must put an educational subject in a story in a manner that will impress the people. For instance, we had an American film called "Men of Steel." It was taken in a very big steel manufacturing plant. The whole of the works were used as a background. The story was just an ordinary love story, but all the time you were looking at it you were impressed by those enormous steel works and indirectly learnt a lot about this most important industry of the world. In the same manner pictures could be produced in India with backgrounds laid in, say, round about some of the enormous irrigation works constructed by the Government in this country. A fine propaganda could be carried on in this way without telling the people actually that they were being instructed.

Q. I understand you to say that there is an undoubted demand for Indian pictures to-day?

A. Yes.

Q. Even of the quality produced now?

A. Yes.

Q. A demand that the existing producers are not capable of supplying?

A. No.

Q. And there is a tremendous opportunity for expansion by the establishment of theatres throughout India?

A. Yes.

Q. Coming to the quota system—

A. What do you mean by quota system?

Q. 7 or 7½ per cent., all cinemas should show Indian films, with a view to help the Indian industry.

A. The Indian film has got enough demand, why force it on every picture theatre in the country?

Q. Could the industry cope with such a demand to-day?

A. As the industry goes on, more theatres will come in. To-day the demand is more than the supply and therefore there is no necessity of forcing any pictures on any cinema. Here the theatres must always be divided between two or three sections of the community. The theatres which show Indian films cannot show European. You have got to cater for a certain number of foreigners and educated Indians and leave the theatres catering for them alone. There is no reason why the Indian film should be mixed up with foreign films, because if a man wants to see an Indian film he has only to go to a theatre which shows it exclusively. If you mix the Indian films with the foreign films you cut out those theatres' custom altogether. If you encourage the building of more theatres it will stop any tendency to monopolise the exhibition side of the business, because no exhibitor or set of exhibitors can go on buying up theatres for ever. All that is necessary is to improve the quality of the films and get more theatres. Forcing Indian films upon every theatre is not at all required.

Q. You seem to be fairly hopeful that you can get Indian produced films across in foreign markets?

A. Provided you make them specially for foreign markets. You must bring stars from over there, international stars. For instance, if you bring an English star, it will mean you will not be able to sell such pictures in America. Therefore you must have American actors to take the leading parts and then you will be able to sell in America and Europe. American stars are known in all those countries.

Q. The market judges more by the Star than by anything else?

A. Yes, you can sell pictures even before they are made if they have particular stars featuring in them.

Q. I notice you say you go in for printing of films. That appears to be one of the inconveniences here, the method of printing Indian films.

A. I have a laboratory but it is just big enough for my own requirements.

Q. I understand that in America it is done entirely separately to the producing very often.

A. Yes. There are firms that do nothing but printing. At the same time there are some big producers who have also their own laboratories.

Q. Would that be a paying line of business in India?

A. Oh! yes.

Q. Laboratory work for all producing companies?

A. Certainly.

Q. And it would be on the whole a sound move for the trade to take?

A. You will have to get in with the producers of the raw stock. If you cannot buy your raw stock cheap then perhaps you will not be able to make money there. I can do that because my firm makes raw stock and supplies me at wholesale prices. But of course that could be arranged with the manufacturers.

Q. That would be a useful thing for the industry instead of each producer printing and developing their own films.

A. Yes. My idea was first of all to establish a laboratory, not a studio which could wait until at least 1,000 cinemas exist in the country.

Q. Do you know anything about the limitations in the Indian market due to provincial boundaries and different customs. I do not think you have found it so in the case of Western films which are shown in every province.

A. Oh! yes, I believe such limitations do exist. The pictures you make here, for instance a Mahratta story, do not go in Bengal and a Bengal story does not go here. That is perfectly true. You will have to make pictures for each province.

Q. Or take subjects that have an all-India interest?

A. There are subjects like that too, but I think it will be necessary to make pictures for each part of the country, dressed up so as to look like the people of the particular provinces in which the picture is to be shown.

Q. That will limit your Indian films to one particular market.

A. Just so.

Q. What about films for the army. They are not getting all the films they require?

A. Oh! yes, they are, so far as the British Army is concerned. We supply to a good many Regimental Institutes.

Q. Have you ever got in touch with the army?

A. We supply to many of them, canteens and other places.

Q. But don't you supply them to the local exhibitor?

A. No, straight to Army Headquarters. You see they run their own cinemas. All they want is cowboy or Western Drama every time, not social and high class dramas. They also want serials.

Mr. Green: Have the Army authorities ever asked you for special films for Indian troops?

A. No, never. I do not think they have any cinemas in the Indian barracks. At any rate I am not aware of it. It may be due to the fact that Indian soldiers can go to the town and visit the cinemas there.

Mr. Neogy: You have spoken about a tendency towards monopoly on the exhibition side. Has there been a gradual process in this direction?

A. Well, not exactly.

Q. How has this come about?

A. I should say for the last 8 or 10 months. Not exactly gradually.

Q. We have been told by a witness to-day,—he was speaking with reference to his experience of a particular place—that certain people who were running theatres had failed in their enterprise and they were compelled to sell their theatres, and that there was only a particular firm prepared to offer a reasonable price. That is the reason why some of the theatres got into the hands of that particular firm.

A. I don't think so. It may have been so in some cases, but not in every case. But, mind you, there is nothing wrong in it. If a man wants to acquire theatres you cannot stop him from doing so, the only thing you can do is to build more theatres.

Q. Is there anything in that process that you take exception to?

A. It might be bad for the trade.

Q. But nothing bad in the process of acquisition itself? If it is done in an aboveboard manner and in the open market, then other people also have the opportunity of purchasing these theatres. Is not that so?

A. Quite so.

Q. You have stated that certain theatres in Bombay who have taken to Indian films are repenting, and are thinking of going back to foreign films because of the unsatisfactory quality of Indian films. I think it was shortsightedness on the part of the producer for which they will have to pay in the end. It does not pay to produce bad films; it prejudices your market.

A. Yes.

Q. You have also stated that Indian production is getting worse and worse. That is your view? Now, in that state of things would you care to exhibit your pictures in the outside world?

A. You mean pictures which are being made now?

Q. Yes.

A. No.

Q. Because I take it that that would prejudice the potential market in the outside world.

A. Yes. There is no hope for it at all. You cannot possibly get them across as they are at present.

Q. Because if you take this shortsighted step the outside market will be lost irrevocably to you?

A. Quite so. Well, it has been tried. As a matter of fact, two or three pictures were sent and shown to certain people and I think they have been rejected straightaway.

Q. Now, you further stated that the most essential element in a picture that would make a world-wide appeal would be the presence of a star of international reputation to take part in the production. How much do you think a star of that description would accept by way of salary for coming out to India?

A. It depends upon the star. If you want a real star probably she will want £500 a week.

Q. For coming out to India?

A. For working weeks here.

Q. Now, when you say that India might take three feet of British films in exchange for one that Britain might take from India I think that condition about the star is present. You make that, the acceptance of even that one foot of Indian film by the outside world, conditional upon the presence of a star of that kind?

A. In that case every picture you make with stars like that you are bound to sell.

Q. But it is your idea that in any such scheme of reciprocity it is not necessary to have stars of that description and that an inferior quality might do as well.

A. Oh! no; you will not sell any Indian picture otherwise.

Q. That is to say you must have these stars even if you want to sell one foot of Indian picture in exchange for three feet of British film?

A. Yes, it would be a good thing as pictures so made will portray the life and custom of the people of the country and will be able to find a market in other parts of the world.

Q. Do you think that would be a great draw in the Western world?

A. I think so. There are such a lot of things you could take in India which the other countries would be very pleased to accept.

Q. And feature films as they are called?

A. In the acted films you have no chance of sending anything without a star in it.

Q. And so far as feature films are concerned, having regard to the huge amount a star would demand, it is not within the range of practical politics?

A. You can get the lesser known and cheaper stars. Perhaps it would be better to have cheaper stars to begin with and engage bigger ones later on. No doubt the expense will be too great at the present moment.

Q. Now you import British pictures in very large quantities. How do you account for the fact that so few British pictures are shown in India?

A. When I say large quantities, I mean my imports of Pathe Gazette—which is an entirely British production—amount to 8 or 9 copies a week, through Calcutta, Bombay, Rangoon and Colombo. That means a lot. It means 9 reels coming into the country every week from England. The production of feature films there of course is very small. Out of 25 or 30 pictures available last year, we brought out 10 or 15 British films which was good enough.

Q. And you are satisfied with the progress that is being made in that direction?



A. Not exactly. In England things have been going up and down. Three years ago there were some very fine pictures. Year before last they dropped and nothing was available. This year with the fillip the new quota system has given to the industry they have come back again. At the present moment there are some 60 films in the making. Not all of them will come on the market, but I am hoping that at least a dozen will be good, and we will bring them out. This year, the season of 1926-27, there was nothing at all. We were practically at a standstill, no production at all.

Q. If this progress is maintained you will consider that very satisfactory?

A. Yes. If England makes films which are good films they will go all over the world. Even America wants them. To-day the Americans have put millions of pounds into their big theatres. Those theatres want something new to show. They are fed up with seeing their own faces like anybody else. If you make a good picture in England they will take it, if it is up to their standard, if it is as good as they want.

Q. And you don't like the idea of the exhibitor in India, being dictated in the matter of the choice of his programme?

A. No, I do not.

Q. If the British film is satisfactory you can depend upon the exhibitor to take it?

A. If it brings money the exhibitor is bound to take it; and I think if better British pictures come along the exhibitor in this country stands to make more money with them than he does on the average American film; because his audience is composed of Britishers or even of Indians who read about British things. They have sympathy with British things. Put two pictures side by side, one containing an English and the other an American story of the same type, and the English story will appeal more to the public and the exhibitor will get more people to see it.

Q. Other things being equal, there is a natural preference in favour of the British film?

A. Certainly. People who go to see the foreign pictures in this country naturally have sympathy with British pictures, and if a good picture comes along it will make more money for the exhibitor and do good to everybody.

Q. Are you in favour of any artificial stimulus being given to the exhibition of British films in India?

A. I do not think it is necessary.

### **\*Oral Evidence of Mr. R. R. GHAREKHAN of the Excelsior Studio, on Friday, the 18th November 1927.**

*Chairman:* You are the proprietor of the Excelsior Studio?

A. No. I have been engaged by the proprietor to put it on a sound basis at present.

Q. As a business manager?

A. No, sort of Studio Manager.

Q. In what department do you assist?

A. All departments but particularly in managing the Studio, in directing and all that.

Q. But what experience have you in that line?

A. I have been making a study of the business for the last year or two as I want to go into it seriously, go in for it myself.

Q. You mean studying books?

A. No, visiting the studios here in Bombay. One of my friends is already a director for the last 2 years, so I go with him.

Q. Gathering practical knowledge.

A. Yes.

Q. But what were you before that?

A. I passed my M. L. examination.

Q. And you have taken to this line. Were you interested in this sort of business? What took you to this line?

A. Well, in college I was much interested in the stage and cinema, I mean interested in seeing, and I had dreams of producing pictures.

Q. Have you produced any films?

A. Not up to now. I want to, but again comes the question of capital.

Q. Who is the proprietor of the Excelsior Studio?

A. Waji Haji, who does not know English.

Q. He has taken it up on behalf of a friend who died?

A. Something like that.

Q. How long have you been in the Excelsior Studio?

A. About a month now. It is very newly started. Waji Haji used to produce films in other studios.

Q. Now what is it you want to tell us? I hear you are interested in the production side.

A. Yes, I am mightily interested.

Q. What is it you want to tell us? You have seen our questionnaire?

A. Well, I don't think it is mentioned in the questionnaire but I think some questions were being put as to what class actors and actresses come from. Can I say something on that subject? Well, much criticism has been levelled at the class from which these actors and actresses come. But I think as long as they behave well, do their work well and ably in the studio, I think they should be considered to come from a very good class. Because the morality in these studios is not very inferior to what might be termed the Hollywood morality.

Q. You have not been to Hollywood?

A. No, but I have read about it.

Q. You think, from your knowledge of the conditions in Indian studios, that the actors that take part there have behaved well. Never mind the comparison. Do you think they are doing well?

A. Quite well. I mean to say, a better class will come forward.

Q. We want only your personal knowledge and personal experience.

A. Yes. And as for starting a central studio, well, if it does not exceed much the cost of production which we incur in our present studios, it is all right, but it ought not to be more costly. There is not a large class of cinema artists at present, and here the studio means studio staff. So if we go to the central studio we will have to take our own staff which will be very difficult at present. So if all the theatres in India are thrown open to the Indian films, and the production is increased, then I think the central.....

Q. You say you cannot speak from experience of any of these things. I should like to hear what you have to say as short as possible.

A. Well, I don't think I have anything particular to say about it. I think you have been told already lots of things. Then there is the question as to films being sent to foreign countries or not—Indian films—whether it would be advisable. I think not. A few films might be sent but it would create a sort of permanent prejudice against the Indian industry. On the contrary, educational films might be sent. Because foreign nations have got a very clear notion about India, that it is a sort of barbarous nation. A sort of topical films might be sent there and the films might be introduced in the schools and colleges and students should know what really is.

Q. Are you a frequent visitor of cinemas here?

A. Well, yes, more or less.

Q. For how many years have you been seeing the cinema?

A. Oh, many years.

Q. Do you think foreign films have any malignant influence on the Indian public?

A. No, I don't think so.

Q. People of your stamp appreciate the foreign film? There is a complaint that they do not appreciate Indian films but that they prefer foreign films. Do you frequent Indian films or foreign films?

A. Both. Unfortunately, I must say I go to enjoy the foreign film and study the Indian film how it can be improved.

Q. For bettering your professional knowledge? So you go to the foreign films in order to study?

A. To study, also to learn something and also to enjoy the film. Because they have always got some new ideas which Indian producers cannot afford to produce.

Q. You do not write stories?

A. I do. I write stories and scenarios but the producers won't have them because they are afraid of the eternal censor. I don't blame the censor at all.

Mr. Green: You have not actually produced any films yet?

A. No.

Q. And you have not had any technical training other than what this studio can give?

A. No.

Q. Then I won't trouble you.

Colonel Crawford: You are manager of a studio at the moment?

A. Yes, at present.

Q. Is the demand of exhibitors for Indian films considerable?

A. Oh yes, it is.

Q. And your studio is always able to keep up with production? Every picture that you can possibly produce is taken?

A. Oh, yes.

Q. That is, barring that the picture is not entirely rotten.

A. All the pictures are taken.

Q. Well, now, you suggested that the scenarios that you have written had been turned down by the exhibitors as likely to be prohibited by the censor. What is the general gist of the story which you wrote?

A. Well, take for example, the film "Sacrifice." If it had not been for the great name of the poet Tagore, it would never have been shown, because it would be considered to hurt somebody's feelings. Unfortunately India is something with antagonistic ideas. So you are bound to hurt somebody's feelings if you take a novel idea.

Q. Yes, but when you had dreams of the cinema in your college days, it was with a view of teaching some great lessons to the Indian peoples. Do you consider that the type of stories generally shown on western film teach a great lesson?

A. I beg your pardon, I wanted to teach other nations what India is.

Q. You wanted to write stories for the west?

A. Yes.

Q. That is a great idea. It is really propaganda on behalf of India.

A. Yes.

Q. That was the idea at the back of your mind? That they ought to understand what India is? Not so much a question of social reform amongst your own people?

A. It goes with it.

*Mr. Neogy:* Have you tried to ascertain as to how far those propaganda films which you have in mind will have a market in foreign countries?

A. Well, that is what I mean, that some social and topical and educational films might be introduced at present so as to give an idea of what India is like.

Q. At India's cost, or do you expect these foreign countries to pay for these films?

A. Of course, they will have to pay. We cannot afford to send them free.

Q. But have you ascertained what the chances are of getting payment?

A. I leave that to the Imperial Government.

Q. You want this to be undertaken purely as a propaganda measure?

A. Also as a business measure. Get some money out of it.

Q. And you would confine your activities within the Empire or extend them to foreign countries?

A. First within the Empire as I think the Imperial Government would give all help to make India better understood.

Q. But you wouldn't keep other foreign countries out of it?

A. By no means.

**Oral Evidence of (1) Miss NANAJBAI CONTRACTOR, Principal, Chandra Ramji Girls' High School, (2) Miss B. A. ENGINEER, M.B.F., J.P., M.A., LL.B., Seva Sadan Society, (3) Miss M. CHITTOPADHYAYA, Principal, New Girls' High School, and (4) Mrs. SONUBAI KABBUR, on Friday, the 18th November 1927.**

*Chairman:* We don't propose to trouble you on the industrial or economic aspects of the industry. As you are, perhaps, aware, the social aspects of the cinema are very important and as ladies taking an interest in public affairs we should like to have your views. Now, probably you have seen the criticism that the cinema is productive of harm to the Indian public, that especially the western films shown in India are productive of a demoralising effect on the Indian public. And we should like to have your views in the matter, whether you consider that there is any real foundation for such a view.

*Miss Chattopadhyaya:* Well, there are so many different types of public. The question is for whom do you want to cater?

Q. Do you think that it has a harmful effect on any public?

A. Well, there are certain films that might, especially on the younger generation. But on the whole the films shown are not so bad. Of course, in Bombay, for instance, most people are used to seeing western ways of life. But take South India. People are not nearly so used to the ways of the west, so that a certain kind of film which might be shown in Bombay may perhaps not be suitable for Madras.

Q. You think Bombay is more advanced?

A. Well, call it advancement or what you will, at any rate it is I think more familiar with Western customs, etc., than other places.

Q. You mean they see more of the western life.

A. Yes. Bombay is more cosmopolitan. So that, whether it is vice or virtue, one gets used to it.

Q. So you think familiarity with such a life is the proper corrective?

A. That is what I think. But, of course, perhaps a little censoring might be done. Sometimes you find an ugly bit. As for all that criticism about

kissing and things of that sort, I don't say that they will be very harmful. But things like this, for instance, I believe there is a picture showing now called "Paint and Powder." Somebody was telling me the other day that in one of the last scenes a drunken lady is thrust into bed. Now, that kind of thing is undesirable. Ugliness should go out. And if we are going to see something of the west, let us never see films that do not do the west justice. Let us see the best side of it.

Q. I quite agree with you as a general principle but do you think the films do justice or do not do justice to the life of the west?

A. Both. There are those that do justice and those that do not do justice. And I think there are more of those that do justice than of those that don't.

Q. Those that do justice are more frequent than those that don't?

A. From the educational point of view, I say, that a system might be adopted of introducing a series of educational films for schools.

Q. That is another aspect of the question. Now we are concerned with the amusement aspect of it. You think that without injuring the amusement aspect of it—because after all that is the main thing—people go to the cinema to get amusement, not to get instruction—if you use the cinema for giving instruction, nobody will go.

A. Incidentally we might get instruction.

Q. Of course, we all learn something from almost everything—but I am not speaking in that sense. The cinema must be attractive, we must do what we have to do without injuring the attractive aspect of it. Do you think that a little more censoring is needed?

A. Yes, just a little more. Oh, I am perfectly sure a little more is needed.

Q. Is that your opinion also?

*Miss Contractor:* Yes, I think certain films which have a very demoralising and injurious effect should be prohibited because it is essential that public morals should be guarded just as we guard public health. I think Indian women are, as a rule, naturally very shy and modest: they are reserved as compared with their sisters of the west. Thus, naturally these films—specially those depicting kissing and indecent flirtation—which may be very common in France or America, are to Indian women very shocking and lowering and they hang their heads down or turn away their faces at the sight. The social customs of the West are quite different to what they are here, and certain films which would be appropriate if they are shown there would have no interest if shown here. The life portrayed there is so different. I had an opportunity of seeing Hollywood some time back when I was in America and the life the cinema actors and actresses were found leading there at first sight struck some of us as rather shocking. But I have not seen any of the studios here; so I cannot compare the two.

Q. Would you like such a life introduced into this country?

A. Not without some modification. I would prefer to have films which would convey a moral lesson or which would have some religious point in them. Of course, these would be desirable and they would be very much patronised especially by Indian women. I would certainly go so far as to suggest that there should be a lady censor on the board.

Q. You are all agreed there?

A. Yes. Now that Government has made an experiment of appointing lady magistrates to preside at the juvenile courts and the experiment has been found to be successful, it is eminently desirable that women should be appointed on the board of censors also; because a woman can always judge better from her own point of view.

Q. Oh, I am sure as mothers and sisters you are interested in the welfare of the youth of the country? And you think it would be useful to have some ladies on the board?

A. Certainly, for who can know better or judge better what films are advisable for young ladies.

Q. Especially if they depict social life.

A. Moral and social life and the like.

Q. Do you think you can get ladies to serve on the board here in Bombay?

A. Yes, I think so. If we are asked, our services will be offered.

Q. Say, 2 or 3 hours a week or even more.

A. Oh, yes.

Q. You think you can find sufficient time?

A. Certainly, many ladies would come forward to offer their services, especially when the cause is so very noble.

Q. Do you then suggest that each film shown to the public should first be examined by 2 or more people?

A. Yes, they should be.

Q. There should not be one individual person?

A. Yes, because if there are different persons they can exchange their views and can exclude what is not desirable or what is not wanted.

Q. But all that, of course, is more a point for the business people. The difficulty suggested is first, that you won't be able to find men with sufficient leisure to devote 2 or 3 hours a week, secondly, that it will entail delay in censoring, thirdly, that there will not be uniformity of standard in the censorship, since the same lady and gentleman will not see every film. Do you think we should attach importance to this aspect or do you attach greater importance to the examination by 2 or more persons?

A. Yes, I think it should be examined by two or more persons.

Q. And you think you will be able to supply the necessary number of men and women in Bombay?

A. I think so.

Q. Do you share in that view, Miss Chattopadhyaya?

Miss Chattopadhyaya: Oh, Well, I know so little about Bombay but I expect it ought to be possible.

Q. Miss. Kabbur, is that your opinion also?

A. Yes.

Q. (To Mrs. Kabbur): Do you think it will be possible for you to give time for this sort of work? Although you have travelled in England still you are very conservative and do you think people like you would be able to find the time for this sort of work?

A. Yes, I think so.

Q. What age would you say should be fixed for adults?

Miss Contractor & Miss Engineer: We think 16 should be the age.

Q. But 16 years is an impressionable age. Do you think it is sufficiently high. It is just the age when they take all the ideas?

Miss Contractor: I think it is not desirable that children below the age of 12 should be allowed to go to the cinema shows, because, first of all, in order to make a film popular there are two things, there is always a woman at the bottom, and secondly, there are plenty of love scenes which it is not desirable for young children to see. Such children should be shown educational and instructive films on subjects like science, scenery, wild animals, and so on, because it will convey instruction to them in a very agreeable form, and they will receive the impressions very easily.

Q. You think that films which show social life in an attractive style should not be shown to children below the age of 12, I mean where love scenes and other things are depicted such films should not be shown to them?

A. It depends upon the discretion of the parents whether they should take their children to such shows or not. They should not be altogether prohibited.

Q. Shall I put it like this, that unless the children are accompanied by their parents they should not be shown such films which are marked "for adults"?

A. No. Because on the contrary their curiosity would be aroused, and while trying to remedy one evil you step into the greater evil. Human nature is such, especially in young children, that they will become all the more curious as to why they are prohibited from seeing certain shows. Then they will have recourse to some indirect way of seeing the cinemas without the permission of the parents.

*Miss Engineer*: Some films should be marked for Adults only.

*Miss Contractor*: We had recently the film called "Damaged Goods". It was meant only for adults, but the curiosity of the children was all the more aroused.

Q. Then you think it is desirable to mark some films as "for adults only"?

*Miss Engineer*: I think so.

*Miss Chattopadhyaya*: I also think so.

*Mrs. Kabbur*: I am also of that view.

*Miss Contractor*: I hold both points of view.

Q. Do you really think that the cinema has some evil influence on the Indian public as it is shown now?

A. I think so, and we feel that a little more censorship is needed.

Q. Do you think it is more strict here than it is in England?

A. Yes, but the west is quite different from the east.

Q. There is more freedom between the sexes there, and that is why the effect is not so very great on impressionable minds as it is here, because from their infancy they do not find anything objectionable or much to criticise in their social manners and customs, nudity, etc., while people here have not such freedom?

A. Yes. I.....

Q. Then you think it is more the tone that you object to, and not light clothing, nudity and things of that sort?

A. The social side of it.

Q. Of course, to judge on a matter like that, you require two or three minds?

A. Exactly.

Q. So you think that every film should be viewed by the censors, especially those which contain the social side of the west?

A. There should be both men and women on the Board.

Q. And also members with a certain amount of western and eastern ideas?

*Miss Contractor*: Yes. It must be a composite body, you must have a Hindu, a Mussalman, a Parsi on it, because there are so many different nationalities here.

Q. But do you think it will count for much?

*Miss Chattopadhyaya*: No, one Indian lady will do, whether Hindu or Mussalman.

Q. Probably the Muslim lady will take a more conservative view because they observe purdah.

A. The effect of western films is just the same as the social life will produce on our youths when they first go to England.

*Mr. Green*: (To *Miss Chattopadhyaya*): I was very interested in the distinction which you made between the different classes of audience. Is it

fair to prevent Bombay seeing a film which might not be so suitable in another city?

A. It is not at all fair, that is my whole point.

Q. Is it practicable? Can we do it? Is the film to be censored in every city?

Miss Chattopadhyaya: Yes.

Miss Contractor: It will depend upon the customs of the people. Now, if a film were shown in Bombay Indian women might not consider it undesirable, but if the same film were shown in the Punjab or Sind where the Purdah system prevails, it would be objected to by Indian women there, for they might feel that their modesty had been insulted.

Q. Now, can you suggest any way by which religious films can be censored?

Miss Contractor: A film might not offend a Muhammadan here, but it might offend him in Sind or in the Punjab. One instance of it recently happened in Burma.

Q. I take it that you do not really consider the religious question very seriously? You would not say that a certain film should be certified especially for Hindus. I gather that your general impression is that some of our western films as represented on the screen are somewhat exaggerated and hurt Indian opinion, at least as much if not more than European opinion, and so the censorship should be tightened up?

A. Western films are so much exaggerated that the Indians naturally gather a wrong impression.

Q. Now with regard to the position of ladies on the Censorship Board, you want that ladies should be on this Board? That is to say, if there are six members, at least two should be ladies?

A. Yes, they should personally inspect the film, otherwise it would be of no value.

Q. You consider there should be a lady, a European and an Indian, and the film should be examined by all these three people?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think that ladies will be found in sufficient number to do the work? Do you realise what that work involves? The censorship of films in Bombay alone takes 3½ hours for five days a week in a year, year in and year out. Censoring won't mean that you should promise to devote 4 hours every week, but it would depend upon the convenience of the film censors. For instance, you may be asked to be present at a certain time which would suit all the others. Do you think after attending to all your household business you would be able to find ladies who would be able to attend to this work. Do you think it will not cause any inconvenience because you will have to fix up your time with your fellow censors? That is not free choice, because the theatres have their public performances and therefore it will have to be some time during the day. Having fixed that you have to take some time for going from your home to the theatre, you have to see the film, write the report or reports and then discuss your reports at weekly or fortnightly meetings?

Miss Contractor: Those ladies who have sufficient leisure and are willing to offer their services will certainly come forward to be on the Censor Board. There are many social workers amongst us, and they would be quite willing to serve on the Censor Board.

Q. I know many of you are social workers, and it is exactly from that class of ladies we expect to get volunteers for this class of work, but the mere fact that they are social workers will make it all the harder for them to work on the Censor Board.

Miss Contractor: But the experiment might be tried, and we are sure ladies of the right type will be forthcoming.



*Miss Chattopadhyaya:* You suggest that on the Board there should be ladies who have experience of both the east and the west.

*Miss Contractor:* Yes. One who has a fair knowledge of both the east and the west should be selected to sit on the Board of Censors, and it would be a great advantage.

*Q.* I have pointed out the general difficulty, but some of the witnesses have come to the conclusion that it might be better to appoint two, three or four stipendiary censors, if necessary including ladies, to examine the films in the first instance and only refer them to the Board if there is any doubt. That is to say, every film should be examined by two people, whether stipendiary officers or otherwise, male or female, and they should report to the Board in case of doubt? You think that might be a good solution?

*Miss Chattopadhyaya:* That would be the best possible scheme. I mean having full time workers.

*Colonel Crawford:* You have spoken of the fact that the cinema to-day has a harmful effect. From your own knowledge as mothers and sisters, do you think that the habits and customs of your own sons and daughters or other relations have been in any way affected by the cinema?

*A.* Yes, to some extent.

*Q.* Has that effect been generally harmful or has it merely produced a tendency to adopt western habits?

*A.* In some cases a harmful effect has been produced temporarily. It all depends upon the type of women and children, there are children and children, and there are women and women.

*Q.* You don't think that the general effect has been harmful?

*A.* Not on the whole.

*Q.* Now as regards films intended for adults only, how would you as parents approve of special children's performances? If exhibitors show special performances for children only, would you take your children willingly and gladly to such performances? I mean if the theatres selected special films like the educational films and so forth which are specially meant for children, would you take your children to such shows?

*A.* Certainly we would, and we would strongly recommend the heads of institutions that they should persuade theatre owners to give such shows for the sake of children. Such shows will be very popular. Parents would pay and take their children to such shows although there may not be much amusement. It will be more instructive from the educational point of view.

*Q.* Have you seen many Indian films?

*A.* Not many of them.

*Miss Chattopadhyaya:* I have seen one or two in Madras and I have been with "The Light of Asia" at Jaipur. I have not seen any of the ordinary social films.

*Colonel Crawford:* But those are "Star" films.

Miss Engineer then urged on the Committee the desirability of putting a social worker and also an educationist on the Censor Board.

### **Oral Evidence of Mr. R. VENKATARAM, Assistant Editor, "The Indian National Herald," on Friday, the 18th November 1927.**

*To Chairman:* I am the Assistant Editor of the "Indian National Herald." I have been a journalist for about 22 years. I have been in Bombay for about 16 years. All that time I have been in the Bombay city itself.

*Chairman:* I dare say you have been following the proceedings of this Committee, although I must say that the proceedings of this Committee, as reported in the Bombay papers, do not correctly represent the proceedings?

*A.* I am very sorry to hear that.

Q. You have seen our questionnaire?

A. Yes.

Q. You have not favoured us with any written statement?

A. I am very sorry. I was directly called on to come here and give oral evidence.

Q. What are the points on which you would like to speak?

A. I should like to speak particularly on British films and Imperial preference, censorship, and Indian films, all these particularly, and generally with regard to foreign films *versus* Indian films.

Q. You want to encourage the Indian film industry?

A. I do not say Government ought to encourage, but what I say is that Government ought to allow them sufficient latitude to pull through by levying some sort of tariff duty on all foreign films irrespective of the country of origin, whether they are British, American or German.

Mr. Green: All non-Indian films?

A. Yes.

Q. As at present?

A. I do not know the present practice.

Q. One fixed rate of duty we have.

A. It would operate both as a protective duty and a revenue duty.

Chairman: You want to allow them to grow?

A. Yes. I do not say it ought to be encouraged, but I would ask for sufficient latitude for Indian films to compete against foreign industries.

Q. You want a quota system to be introduced?

A. I am against it positively because it will not work, and secondly, the British people are not interested in the Indian films and they do not care very much for them.

Q. When you say "quota system" you mean it is British. I am talking of a quota system for Indian films.

A. I do not know very much about it and I do not want to speak about it.

Q. That is to say, would you advise our recommending that a quota system should be adopted, by which every exhibitor will be compelled to show some percentage of Indian film in his theatre.

A. Not necessarily. I do not favour that.

Q. You are against any preference being shown as between the non-Indian ones?

A. Any preference being shown for any foreign films, including the British.

Q. Whether Empire or otherwise?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think the Indian public would not tolerate it?

A. Really nationalist Indian opinion will not tolerate that kind of thing.

Q. There are some who are really nationalist and others who are not?

A. Others are indifferent. I do not say they are not nationalist, but they are not so staunch.

Q. Do you believe that the cinema has any evil influence on the public?

A. I do not think so, at any rate, not worse than the other things that are at work at present.

Q. But if it is bad, it does not matter whether it is worse or not. Has it any evil influence?

A. I do not believe it has generally.

Q. Because you said it is not worse than other things.

A. Not worse than other things that obtain at present.

Q. I want to know whether its influence is bad.

A. No, not comparatively. I do not think the cinema is any worse than what.....

Q. You do not agree with that great Indian who says that cinema is only productive of evil and it has to be proved whether it is productive of good.

A. I do not know whom you have in mind.

Q. Never mind who it is, but he is a very great man I may tell you and I regard him with great reverence.

A. I do not agree with that opinion.

Q. You think our boys and girls are safe in their morals and behaviour with the films now shown?

A. Yes. They would not be worse off.....

Q. Again you say worse than something.

A. There is no use emphasising excessively or unduly only one aspect of the matter with reference to the cinema alone. We have got to take the general conditions of life to-day.

Q. We are not concerned with that.

A. Taking the general conditions and comparing the effect of the cinema with reference to those conditions I believe there will be no harmful effects.

Q. It is not a question of what will be, but I want to your opinion as to what is?

A. There is not any.

Q. Are you satisfied with the censorship as it is?

A. No. It is very egregious here in Bombay as far as I could see. As a journalist myself I have had occasion to criticise the conduct of the censorship here in Bombay more than once. I have specially brought the list furnished by the Bombay Censorship Board from month to month and published in the Bombay Gazette just to indicate to this Committee that the censorship is not working properly or even satisfactorily.

Q. Censorship with reference to foreign films?

A. Both, foreign and Indian films.

Q. You have no complaint to make that there is any distinction observed between foreign films and Indian films?

A. I do not think so.

Q. Then what is the nature of the complaint that you make?

A. My complaint is that their judgment is very freakish and that judgment is exercised in a most indifferent manner through subordinates and not directly by the Board itself. Then there is a certain amount of vagary in it. Sometimes they pass certain things.....

Q. Can you give one or two instances where you have found that?

A. There were certain films produced by the Kohinoor Film Co. and there were certain other things dealing with Indian life. So far as I could see, in the films themselves there was nothing wrong.

Q. What is that film?

A. I cannot give you the name at the moment but I would let you have it if you like to-morrow.

Q. What sort of thing which you say was not objectionable and still which the censor.....

A. It dealt with certain aspects of Indian traditional life.

Q. It is very vague. Can you not give me some more particulars about it?

A. I will let you have the details in regard to that particular matter later. I have dealt with that in the course of an editorial comment. The "Vande Mataram" film, dealing with educational aspects of present day, the Board were so touchy regarding it that they changed the title to "Vande Mataram Ashram" and censored the film ruthlessly.

Q. Can you not tell us what it is you object to?

A. I am very sorry. It is a question of some months now since I dealt with the matter.

Q. I want to know whether it left any impression on your mind, a lasting impression?

A. It did make an impression on me at the time. It compelled me to comment on it and I had a very strong comment on the Board's conduct.

Mr. Neogy: How could you see the film before it was censored?

A. I had seen the film before privately. I do not think there was anything wrong with the film, but the censorship has cut out certain portions.

Chairman: Still it leaves me quite blank.

A. I am very sorry about it. But I can give you other films with regard to this matter.

Mr. Green: Your complaint is that they are too severe?

A. I do not say they are too severe or too lax, but what I say is that they are egregious in their judgment.

Q. How do you define egregious? It is rather journalistic than literary.

Chairman: Erratic?

A. Yes, if you wish it to be put so.

Q. They do one thing in a certain way and in a different way at another time?

A. That is my complaint.

Q. Can you give us an instance of that because this Committee has been appointed to see whether there is any foundation for any of these general allegations, and I will thank you if you can help us with particulars.

A. I could mention "Chandrarao More" of the United Pictures Syndicate. Here was a title which referred to the Swaraj Flag. It was a play which dealt with the life of Shivaji and one of the titles read that the Swaraj Flag should be flown from every home. The censorship in Bombay was so touchy about it that they decided to delete it. There is another film "Umaji Naik," also by the United Pictures Syndicate. Its story deals more or less with the case of an Indian Robin Hood adapted from a book written by Captain MacIntosh. It is an old work, and according to Captain MacIntosh, if the man had lived in the times of Shivaji he would have been another Shivaji. He robbed the rich to help the poor; also he respected the pious and holy people as well as the women. Still the censorship would not allow certain scenes in that particular film. They cut out scenes relating to Umaji's encounters with the police.

Q. Have you got the endorsement of the film?

A. No, I have not seen the endorsement. I mention it because I happen to have had some conversation with the producers on the subject and seen the film myself.

Q. When was this?

A. Some time back. I cannot give you the exact date.

Q. You have commented on it in your newspaper?

A. No. I have not commented on it; but these things have come to my notice in the course of my vocation.

Q. You did not comment on them; you did not take any notice when they came to your knowledge?

A. No. They came to my notice but I did not comment on them.

Q. May I put it to you to shorten the proceedings, you think there is a political bias in the censorship?

A. Not merely political bias but a political, mental, moral and social bias.

Q. And religious?

A. If I may put it generally it is a case of psychological bias.

*Mr. Coatman:* I cannot follow that.

*Chairman:* That is your point; but I mean from the instance you gave I gathered that you were thinking that there was a sort of political bias in the censorship?

A. Yes.

Q. The Censors are too nervous with reference to certain scenes?

A. Too prudish.

Q. You would apply the word prudish to.....

A. To the conduct of the Board, with reference to some of these scenes and characters. There ought to be a widening in our outlook of mind as we advance.

Q. Would you like Indian ladies to be shown in the way Western ladies are shown?

A. You can't help it.

Q. I mean in Indian pictures; would you like a Madrassi lady—a Madrassi Brahmin lady—shown in an Indian picture, dressed in a Western costume?

A. If she were so shown I would not object to it.

Q. On what ground would you not object to it?

A. Because these things are happening in real life. They may seem exceptional cases at present, but an exception proves the rule which is coming along.

Q. So in an Indian film depicting Madrassi life you would allow a Madrassi lady to appear in a non-Madrassi costume?

A. If the producer conceived an idea like that I would not object to it. There ought to be a certain amount of latitude.

Q. You call that latitude?

A. It would be latitude to the producer.

Q. Supposing they depict Rangachariar without a turban in a hat?

A. Would that be wrong?

Q. Supposing your character was being portrayed as addressing a public meeting without a Gandhi cap and khaddar dress, and you were dressed in a Bond Street costume; supposing you were shown on the film as addressing a public meeting at Chowpatti in a full English Bond Street costume, do you think it would be right?

A. I do not know what a Bond Street costume is. If somebody took a fancy to represent me in full English costume I would not object to it.

*Mr. Green:* You are a critic?

A. I don't know. I am a student of the world.

Q. Would you subscribe to these general principles as suitable for the criticism of any artistic production? (1) No general and rigidly applicable rule can be laid down. (2) It is essential to be consistent but impossible to arrive at strictly logical conclusions. (3) A film should be judged on its own merits.

A. Yes.

Q. Those principles I have read out are the first suggestions of the Bombay Film Board of Censors to its film inspectors. Your grievance is that they are not interpreted consistently; the Board itself is erratic, sometimes too severe, sometimes too prudish. You are possibly aware that I have been a censor myself.

A. Yes.

Q. Human nature being what it is and so many men, so many opinions, have you any way to suggest of overcoming this difficulty?

A. The best way is to abolish the Censorship Board and leave the public to judge for itself.

**Q.** You would seriously advocate the total abolition of the Censorship Board?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You think public opinion would be sufficiently strong to prevent anything from being shown—shall we say, public opinion reinforced by the police?

**A.** Not necessarily; public opinion is strong enough in these days.

**Q.** Would you allow anything to be shown on the screen publicly?

**A.** Something may seem objectionable to a certain class of people, but it the bulk of people that patronise these films consider anything objectionable that thing will never be shown again.

**Q.** I will take your point though I think it is rather extreme. But assuming that it is decided that censorship in some form must be retained, can you see any method of curing the present inconsistencies and errors of the Board?

**A.** I should suggest that the Board should be very much more widened than it is at present so as to allow certain outside influences to operate on the present Censorship Board which is very limited.

*Chairman:* It may err the other way.

**A.** I do not know about that.

**Mr. Green:** You would naturally in such an expanded Board like to see people.....

**A.** With a wider outlook, and more liberal ideas.

**Q.** You would also welcome the inclusion of gentlemen of orthodox or, shall we say, ultra-conservative views?

**A.** You might have them.

**Q.** I mean, if you have the one would you not have the other?

**A.** I should like to see the work entrusted to people not necessarily conservative or orthodox but of wider outlook?

**Q.** Who is to appoint them?

**A.** The authority which appoints the Board now and they must give up their political bias against any particular class of people being on the committee.

**Q.** Is it not absolutely certain that whoever appoints that Board of Censors, there will be criticisms either from you who represent the forward school or from gentlemen of the conservative school?

**A.** There will be criticism at any time.

**Q.** Therefore although the Board if constituted according to you will give satisfaction to you it might very seriously offend other sections of the community?

**A.** It might, but you have to consider the opinion of the majority.

**Q.** Do you claim to represent the majority, the whole of India's 330 millions?

**A.** I do still maintain that the point of view I am putting forward is the view favoured very much by the majority.

*Colonel Crawford:* You have no doubt, I suppose, of the great value of the film as an educational factor in the world?

**A.** None whatever. I am absolutely sure it is educationally sound.

**Q.** I am not now alluding to the definite use of films for education but films shown generally. There is no doubt that they are a tremendous factor?

**A.** I would certainly advocate the use of films much more for educational purposes.

**Q.** I was alluding to the other question. You have no doubt about the educative value of the films to-day. In view of that opinion, do you think there is any tendency, so far as India is concerned, for the influence of the film to be harmful rather than beneficial?

A. No I don't believe these films to be harmful in any sense.

Q. Do you think that the tendency is beneficial on the whole?

A. To some extent it would be good.

Q. Your general idea is that it is good. In view of the great power that it is do you think it would be wise for Government to have some measure of guidance and control over it?

A. I do not believe Government ought to interfere in it at all. As I suggested just now, it ought to be left to the class of people that patronise these films.

*Chairman:* I suppose you are aware some people are fond of seeing also obscene things.

A. There is a morbid mentality; you cannot get over it.

Q. Will you allow them freedom?

A. They must have freedom. If other people have freedom why should they not have it?

*Colonel Crawford:* You spoke generally in favour of protection to assist the Indian industry?

A. No. What I am suggesting on the other hand is that the Indian film should be allowed to grow on its own merits; but there must be a certain amount of tariff on all the foreign films to serve both as a protective and a revenue-producing measure.

Q. I can understand it as a revenue-producing measure. You are in favour of general preference for all India or are you in favour of discriminating protection to key industries?

A. I would put it generally I am not in favour of any protection for any industry, under the present system of Government.

Q. You are a freetrader. You would not consider the film industry a key industry?

A. No.

Q. As regards foreign films that come into the country, I understood you to say you are in favour generally of an open market for films of any kind. Would you be against any monopoly?

A. Yes, entirely against any monopoly.

Q. Now, as a pressman of some prominence, do you think the press can assist in keeping the standard of the films up to the mark by frank criticism?

A. Yes, they could if they were independent of business influences.

Q. That is the answer I wanted to get. Is it not possible for the press to combine for this purpose?

A. Not in present conditions in India.

Q. Supposing you criticise a film shown by one of the cinemas adversely; you don't like it artistically, you think it rotten. Then that cinema withdraws its advertisement from your paper. Need that affect you?

A. So far as my paper is concerned we have not had much regard for such influences but we have tried to do our duty. But my own experience of Indian journalism—and by Indian journalism I mean both the purely Indian and the Anglo-Indian press—my experience of the way things are carried on here is that they are very much affected by an excessive consideration for the feelings of producers and theatre proprietors.

*Mr. Coatsman:* You are now on the "National Herald." What other papers have you served on?

A. In the past I was intimately connected with the "Bombay Chronicle." Then I had a daily paper of my own for a short time. Before that I was connected with some other papers. I was also connected with the "Independent" of Allahabad.

Q. Anyway your experience is long and varied.

A. Yes.

**Q. What is the extent of your interest in the cinema?**

**A. My interest is the interest of the public. I am not concerned with the producers or exhibitors but I speak from the public point of view.**

**Q. Do you ever write about it?**

**A. Sometimes when I have seen some film which I think deserves to be noticed. I have criticised them sometimes.**

**Q. But do you ever write general articles on the subject of the cinema?**

**A. No I don't.**

**Q. But you write occasionally?**

**A. Occasionally when I have visited a cinema and considered the subject calls for comment I have expressed my opinion in the press.**

**Q. And your criticism is usually hostile?**

**A. No. Not necessarily. If the film is good I have praised it; but if the film is bad I have said it is bad.**

**Q. What moves you to write about a film you have seen?**

**A. The impression it produces on my mind.**

**Q. Supposing you saw a film that pleased you, not particularly but just pleased you; and supposing you went and saw another film that displeased you, the tendency to write about the second would be stronger?**

**A. Not always. I might criticise in particular instances.**

**Q. Could you tell me how often you have written about films say during the last 3 months?**

**A. During the last 3 months I think I might have written once or twice. I have dealt recently with two films. One was "Savitri," the other was "Kamala Thorat," both Indian films. One is mythological and the other is historical.**

**Q. Have you any particular preference for such films?**

**A. Not necessarily. I visit any interesting film, whether Indian or otherwise.**

**Q. How do you find Indian films as compared with others?**

**A. Some of them are good, but the others could be improved with reference to their technique, their direction, photography and so on.**

**Q. You are a journalist and therefore you have gained a good deal of literary experience. Are you satisfied with the subjects of Indian films.**

**A. The subjects are fairly good but the handling may not be generally satisfactory. In all cases it has not been satisfactory.**

**Q. I suppose the handling, the direction of the film and the technique and so on are items in your enjoyment or non-enjoyment of it?**

**A. Quite.**

**Q. Which would you prefer to see, an Indian film or a Western film?**

**A. I should like to see both sorts.**

**Q. But presuming you had to choose between the two?**

**A. It all depends on the subject. I should certainly prefer certain historical films produced in India to other films.**

**Q. Your friends are of course mostly among educated people?**

**A. I have friends among working class people too. In fact I may describe myself as a worker.**

**Q. Well then your opinion must be most valuable as it represents both the educated and the working classes; you have there a regular cross section of Indian society. Now, do you find always a general preference for Indian films?**

**A. Yes, among the working classes.**

**Q. What about the educated classes?**

**A. Their opinion is generally in favour of foreign films.**

**Q. Why is that? Because of the better handling and technique?**



A. No, because of certain aspects of the film exhibited. It is a question of psychology.

Q. That is your experience of the educated classes generally speaking?

A. Yes. The educated classes on the average have a partiality for the lighter side of life.

Q. What do you think would happen if there was a really marked improvement in the get up of Indian films?

A. They would certainly be better patronised than foreign films.

Q. By both classes?

A. Yes.

Q. Now, is your income on the "National Herald" from cinema advertisements substantial?

A. It is not inconsiderable.

Q. If you were to lose it would it matter much to you?

A. No, it would not mean very much to me. So far as we are concerned we have been trying to avoid the business influences dominating our editorial policy. I do not speak positively for the editorial or managerial policy because I represent myself here. I am speaking generally.

Q. Now your views on the subject of censorship are a little nihilistic. If it were possible I suppose they would be still more severe on the subject of newspaper censorship. Would you agree to having cinema advertisements censored?

A. Well, cinema posters ought to be controlled and could be controlled.

Q. What about cinema advertisements in newspapers?

A. I do not think we ought to interfere with it at all. No respectable newspaper would have any advertisement that was deleterious.

Q. I saw one in a newspaper the other day which rather shocked me.

A. So far as my own impression is concerned I can say that we do not allow any deleterious advertisements to appear in our paper.

Q. This was an advertisement of a film "Ladies at Play" and round the title there were ladies dancing and kicking and one lady had no dress at all. Well, do you think that sort of thing ought to be allowed?

A. There is nothing wrong in it considering the conditions of life we see all round here. People are used to it and do not take very much notice of it. Only when you interfere with them is public attention drawn to such matters. The Excelsior and other Madan theatres exhibit certain posters on their walls which I don't think very many people take notice of; but once you make a pointed attack on them public attention is drawn to them and people begin to observe them particularly.

Chairman: You said something about posters being controlled? Have you seen any objectionable posters?

A. I have—some of Madan's posters for instance. If you like you might go round and see the posters in connection with their film "The Lady of the Harem" which is being exhibited at the Empire Theatre.

Q. Have you seen the film yourself?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you object to that film?

A. I do not object to the theme but to the way in which Orientals are shown therein, the way in which they are mis-represented.

Q. You don't like it?

A. I do not think it is fair to us Orientals.

Q. Did you show your disapproval of the film?

A. I am very sorry I didn't.

Q. You did not hiss or hoot?

A. No.

**Mr. Neogy:** Are you aware that at the present moment the censorship Board is wholly nominated by Government, that it is controlled by the Home Department, and that it is under the chairmanship of the Commissioner of Police? And are you satisfied with all these conditions?

**A.** No, I am entirely disappointed with the way in which the Censorship Board is constituted.

**Q.** I thought so long as you had the sort of men you have in mind, you did not care which authority appointed them?

**A.** If the Board is widened very much more, as I suggest, then that will bring in to some extent the real influences of the public.

**Q.** But on whose judgment would you prefer to depend?

**A.** I would prefer the Legislature as it is constituted at present to the Government.

**Q.** How would that be done? You want a committee of the Legislature?

**A.** No.

**Q.** You want the Board to be constituted from among the members of the Legislature?

**A.** No, not necessarily. Outsiders ought to be selected.

**Q.** To act as a Censorship Board?

**A.** Yes; and to make the Board sufficiently wide to allow of all talents coming in.

**Q.** So you are not satisfied with the existing constitution or the manner in which it is appointed, or the authority which constitutes the Board?

**A.** The authority I have not had in view, but the position is entirely unsatisfactory at present.

**Q.** But for administrative purposes under which department of Government should it be placed?

**A.** The Legal Department, not the Home Department. The Home Department have got a parochial interest in it, and suffer from reactionary views.

**Chairman:** I thought you would have suggested the Industries or the Education Department.

**A.** The Industries department in Bombay is not very reliable as a guide in regard to these matters. The question should naturally rest with the Legal Department. They are the proper people who could exercise some judgment on this matter.

**Mr. Green:** May I put a supplementary question. If you are going to expand your board so as to represent all tastes, how is that Board to operate? Is every member of the Board to see each film?

**A.** The whole Board as a body should see the films.

**Q.** You are aware of the number of films examined at present. It amounts to 3½ hours a day for 5 days a week throughout the year.

**A.** From the list of films that is being published every month I do not suppose it imposes so much strain on the Board.

**Q.** But I can assure you it is a matter of arithmetic. Here is the length of films examined in Bombay, over 3½ million feet. It takes an hour to see 4,000 feet. That works out to 877 hours a year which is equivalent to 3½ hours a day for 5 days a week all the year round.

**A.** They can appoint their own sub-committees in order to facilitate their own work.

**Q.** But the moment you get sub-committees some people would be left out. Whose point of view should be represented?

**A.** There might be several sub-committees, not one.

**Q.** Even assuming that, the sub-committee might not contain you for instance.

A. I do not want to make it a personal question with reference to any member of the Board. I mean if it is a Board constituted in a broad manner we will have to take it with all its points, good and bad.

Q. Don't you think that would be inconsistent?

A. It might appear inconsistent but you cannot complain of it.

**Written Statement of Mr. J. D. KHANDHADIA, dated the 6th November 1927.**

1. Yes. I know something about Cinematographs and the Cinema Film Industry in India, which, I hope, may be useful to the honourable committee. The knowledge acquired is general, myself being a regular cinema-goer frequenting cinemas more for keen and critical observation of the growth and development of the Industries than for the sake of amusement.

2. (a) Before I can answer this question, it is essential that both the classes referred to should be clearly defined. I therefore, for my purposes, assume that (a) illiterate classes shall include persons not knowing even or knowing only the alphabet of vernacular; (b) semi-literate class shall include persons possessing education of from 4 Vernacular standards to 6 English standards; and (c) educated class shall include matrices and onwards. With this clear definition of the units at hand, I can now safely say from my 10 years' experience that the illiterate and semi-literate classes of people frequent cinemas more than the educated class. Talking of cinemas in Bombay City and Presidency, I have seen at all times that in an average good show (Indian or European Film), the 3rd and 2nd classes are nearly fully packed, which are mostly occupied by illiterate and semi-literate classes respectively whereas the 1st and higher classes generally occupied by educated classes are nearly half empty. This, according to my opinion will lay down an average proportion of the classes in an audience as below:—

	Per cent.
Illiterate . . . . .	40
Semi-literate . . . . .	45
Educated . . . . .	15

(b) and (c) As for the composition of a Bombay Cinema show, I must say that it mostly depends upon the nature of the locality, the story of the film, other environment and the methods of propaganda and advertisements employed by the proprietors. With a view therefore to give the committee a clear idea of different kinds of audiences in different kinds of shows, I will classify Bombay Cinemas into 4 main groups and give a table of analysis of the composition of audiences therein in an average good show:—

*Group 1.—Cinemas showing High Class European Society Dramas.*

In this class I may place:—

- (1) The Excelsior.
- (2) The Royal Opera House.
- (3) The Empire.

Composition of audience in an average good show:—

Educational.		Sexual.		Racial.	
	Per cent.		Per cent.		Per cent.
Illiterate . . . . .	10	Males . . . . .	60	Europeans . . . . .	30
Semi-literate . . . . .	30	Females . . . . .	25	Parsis . . . . .	40
Educated . . . . .	60	Boys . . . . .	15	Hindus . . . . .	20
				Miscellaneous . . . . .	10
	100		100		100

**Group 2.—Cinemas showing Light Literature Films Appealing to Middle Class Taste:**

In this class I may place:—

- (1) The Wellington.
- (2) The West End.
- (3) The Empress.
- (4) The Edward.
- (5) The Universal Picture House.

Composition of audience in average show:—

Educational.		Sexual.		Racial.	
	Per cent.		Per cent.		Per cent.
Illiterate	10	Males	70	Europeans	5
Semi-literate	45	Females	15	Parsis	30
Educated	35	Children	15	Hindus	45
				Miscellaneous	20
	100		100		100

**Group 3.—Cinemas showing only Indian Mythological or Social Films.**

In this I may place:—

- (1) The Krishna.
- (2) The Imperial.
- (3) The Majestic.
- (4) The Novelty.

Composition of audience in average show:—

Educational.		Sexual.		Racial.	
	Per cent.		Per cent.		Per cent.
Illiterate	40	Males	60	Europeans	nil
Semi-literate	55	Females	25	Parsis	5
Educated	5	Children	15	Hindus	75
				Miscellaneous	20
	100		100		100

**Group 4.—Cinemas showing low grade Serial Films of Thunder, Thrills and Fights.**

In this I may place:—

- (1) The Globe.
- (2) The Crown.
- (3) The Royal.
- (4) The Venus.

Composition of audience in average show:—

Educational.		Sexual.		Racial.	
	Per cent.		Per cent.		Per cent.
Illiterate	70	Males	70	Europeans	nil
Semi-literate	29	Females	2	Parsis	2
Educated	1	Children	28	Hindus	55
				Miscellaneous	43
	100		100		

According to my opinion the following classes of European films are on an average most popular with Indian audiences quantitatively, especially in Bombay and Ahmedabad, which are mentioned in order of present popularity:—

- (1) Good social dramas of real life (specially love stories) finished in 5 to 7 parts.
- (2) Comedy Films of stars, such as Chaplin, Harold Lloyd, Reginald Denny and others.
- (3) Serials of Dare Devils.

I must add that with the change of times, the taste of people is also changing as is evident from the fact that the order of popularity, 10 years before, was Nos. 3, 1 and 2.

Now Indian films have of late entered the field with all their branches except the 3rd one. In its early birth, just as Carl Laemmle, Director of the Universal Picture Corporation began in 1909 with their first picture of "Hiawatha," the Indian film industry also began with such mythological stories from popular epics, such as "Lanka Dahan" (from Ramayanam), "Kichak Vadh" (from Mahabharata), etc., and now have plunged into the field of social subjects of real life. Owing to several factors such as Indian psychology, small resources, political and social conditions, they have not yet cultivated, nay even entered, the field of Humour, Daring and Adventure. Thus the order of popularity in Indian films was 10 years before as (1) Mythological stories (2) social subjects which is now in the process of being reversed.

4. Exhibitors have to cater for Indian audiences. It is indispensable as in Rome they have to do as Romans do and give what Romans want. Where they do not do so adequately, failure necessarily follows except in an isolated case where a cinema is situated in a European locality and has already won European popularity by showing the best European films. Others, of course, cater adequately for Indian audiences but for various reasons they cater defectively in that they do not know or try to pass the proper channels to approach the masses and their taste.

5. They try to depict real Indian life but by over-acting, artificial effects, inappropriate sceneries, unscientific production and such other defects, they are—

- (1) Only a very few of good quality so good as may appeal to the taste of refined and educated persons.
- (2) However, popular in illiterate and semi-literate masses only, who see them more with curiosity and love instinct and as a pastime without any other alternative than with scientific points of view.
- (3) Profitability of an Indian film depends upon the locality in which the Cinema situates, its past popularity and methods of advertising. These factors being against, even a good Indian picture will also fail.

6. (a) Yes—provided these films are produced in a scientific manner for which the resources at the producers' hands must be unlimited and all state aid forthcoming for shooting scenes in which it is necessary.

(b) of such films as I have laid the order of popularity above.

- (1) Social dramas of real Indian life and humorous productions will appeal to the taste of educated classes.
- (2) Dare Devil Films and mythological subjects will appeal to illiterate masses.

7. I am not in a position to say anything on this subject, except that only films of daring, war, boxing, sports, humour, etc., are suitable and popular with troops.

8. Not at all. All these branches are defective, since not a single one of them is worked out in a scientific manner, the chief reasons being—

(1) Nepotism on the part of proprietors, so to say, their mentality to employ their staff from near relations more than from qualified hands.

(2) Aloofness on the part of educated persons from stage life.

9. Sometimes they are and sometimes not. As far as I know British film releasers quote highest and hence they have lost great grounds in the market of demand. I do not see any monopoly or tendency towards monopolising good films but I do see that certain French and British Film Companies, such as Blue Bird, Goldwyn, etc., produce good social dramas and quote highest, but then it is indirectly harmful to their own interests, because, economically, increase in prices causing less turn-over always results in inadequate return of investment.

10. I do not know.

11. Yes. Exhibitors must, for their own interests, pre-view all films before accepting the films offered.

12. The Amusement Tax is a handicap to an exhibitor to the extent that he has to take the trouble of finding actual sales under various classes and prepare the statement of tax due to the Government every time. But since most of them have increased their ticket charges proportionately, I do not think it is a financial handicap to them. Mere trouble is no novel handicap to them since limited companies have to do the same thing in charging, collecting from their employees and remitting Income-tax to the Income-tax Department. Indirectly the tax may be causing less audiences but that can be no excuse for abolishing a tax if it is imposed and utilised for the greatest good of the greatest number of the public.

13. The number of this question is 13! In an American Film a band of 13 burglars had done great mischief! Consequent to the ill-starred number the question turned out to be too deep and unanswerable in few words. A book can be written by economists on customs tariff on commodities and their effects on the economic social, etc., conditions of the country. I therefore leave this unanswered.

14. No, but they will be greatly instructive to the illiterate masses and fathers of men or citizens of to-morrow and will increase their general knowledge of world and its scientific progress.

Demand or no demand, such films must be treated as "Text books" and "Film-showing as a subject" in schools, which is not "taught" but "shown", in the case of students; and treated as "officers' speeches" to peasants in the case of illiterate masses; and therefore must be shown so regularly as to form a part of village and school life.

15. By all means, mother nature always keeps both kinds of conditions, favourable and unfavourable, ready in all places of the creation for men to carry out any experiment. It is, therefore, up to men to carve out their way to success, by usurping the favourable and crossing the unfavourable conditions.

There are:—

- (1) Masses with the necessary curiosity to see films in each Province,
- (2) Expert story writers,
- (3) Moneyed men to finance such adventures,
- (4) Modern facilities such as Railways, Posts, Newspapers, Telegraphs, Telephones, etc.,
- (5) Beautiful landscape and country's history,
- (6) Educated persons ambitious of having stage life and screen life,
- (7) The Government and States to help the cause as evident from the appointment of this Committee.

These conditions are all favourable.

16. There are many but they are in the dark for want of invitation, support, encouragement and appreciation. They may be lacking in technical knowledge but their in-born ability and instinct are there which only require sympathetic encouragement.

17. The measure to find out such expert hands is "to invite, accept and appreciate everything about Cinema and Film from public" like tenders for commodities required!

18. Yes.

19. Yes I do, and the legislation I suggest is to pass a Bill and enact an act under the style "*Indian Cinema and Film Co's. Act*" on lines similar to Indian Companies Act. Just as a registrar sits to watch and record companies work and movements and courts are the watch dogs of the legitimacy of them, similarly "*a stage and screen officer*" and "*Cinema board*" may be appointed in each province under such Act to—

- (a) register new companies and cinemas,
- (b) watch and regulate their work,
- (c) give Government aid in taking scenes, film tours and performances,
- (d) give scientific aid, stories, employees, experts, etc.,
- (e) procure and censor foreign films,
- (f) censor Indian films and dramas,
- (g) settle by arbitration differences between cinemas, film companies, employers and employees, etc.,
- (h) gather useful stage and screen statistics,
- (i) gauge and mould public taste to a higher standard,
- (j) receive and remedy complaints from the public against exhibitors,
- (k) collect Amusement tax,
- (l) enforce Government Legislation,
- (m) to produce films of government topical gazettes and procure British Empire gazettes,

and thus be the regulators of the morality standard of public taste in amusements. (If at all the principle involved in this scheme suggested by me is acceptable to the Committee then I am prepared to draw up a detailed scheme.)

20. (a) I suggest that the scheme of the above legislation (in Answer 19) be financed and carried out with the Government funds received by way of Amusement tax.

(b) From amusements. If expended towards the improvement of the Amusement is more than justifiable.

21. By monopolising Indian films through the creation of a State Agency, I think there will be no scope for rivalry and healthy competition between Indian Film Companies in the absence of which better and still better than the other pictures will not be forthcoming except patent goods of only one kind from the Government Film Factory! Moreover, I am afraid people always suspecting Government motives will not give full support to such action. If they do, then some new leaders will be born with a cry of "*Satyagraha*" against seeing Government films on the plea that "They are producing films to Westernize or baptize Indians" or "to prepare Indians against future German or Chinese Wars" or "to exploit Indian pockets to the advantage of British capitalists" and such other rubbish!! thus creating new political conditions in the country. There are of course possibilities that some officer may misuse the powers vested in him. Moreover this is not even equitable because when newspapers, who have also equally as much a free hand as cinemas in moulding public taste, enjoy liberty why should not the latter enjoy the same liberty? I would therefore lay stress on the point that film companies should be quite free from Government intervention but by carrying out the scheme in Answer 19 all Government facilities and State aid should be available to them for furtherance of their activities.

22. When India has its own problem of encouraging the Indian film industry, I think it is an overburden upon her to be **anxious** for the plight of British film industry and thus look both ways. However, as a part of the British Empire, it is India's duty to do something for British films, which something I suggest should be to lay down a rule for "the stage and screen officer" to procure 60 per cent. of good British films at special rates for cinemas under his jurisdiction desiring to show western films. By bringing cinemas into direct touch with the officer as to the quality and quantity of imported films, under provisions of the special cinema Act, I think foreign film importers will have to leave the field, on whose shoulders rests the responsibility of enriching a cheap country (America) at the cost of 2 good countries (India and Britain)!

23. (a) To some extent through Topical Gazettes of one part as a side show in addition to the principal drama.

(b) Every State, Colony and Commonwealth in the British Empire should create a Cinema Publicity Department through which regular films of Government activities should be produced and distributed within the Empire.

## PART II.

24. (a) Especially detective and dare-devil deeds films have at times a demoralising effect upon the public mind. But one cannot stop it by law. They have also their moralising side. By being more careful in selecting such stuff, the effect can be reduced day by day. There are newspapers which also demoralise and yet what law could do in that respect?

(b) Not now after the creation of censor Boards. There was circulation 10 years ago but those days have gone.

(c) In my opinion the following films are harmful in the way mentioned below:—

(1) Dare-Devil Serials are harmful in that they are criminally suggestive in many cases. The Bawla murder case, cases of kidnapping, robberies, show the effects of such serials but I do not think the harm is so much as to be seriously dealt with; on the contrary people also have learnt with present mindedness latest method of self defence, etc., in unexpected attacks.

(2) Love stories with extreme scenes of love are harmful in one way, viz., they encourage sexual desires in an average Indian mind already at a lower moral standard.

Both the above classes of films are harmful to some extent to children and illiterate masses.

(d) I think gradually adequacy of censorship in sex and crime films is increasing, as evident from the present conditions vastly changed from those of 10 years before.

(e) Not at all; not necessary since no change is suggested in the present conditions of censorship.

25. I do.

26. (a) American films featuring so called Indian criminal gangsters, etc., are offensive to the Indian public and greatly harmful to their self respect. These must be checked.

(b) I do not remember the names of such films but I have seen about 3 such offensive films—one was probably "The Rajah".

27. (a) On the contrary in certain films efforts were made to mis-represent Indian civilisation and show West as best! But the contrary seems to have happened! The average Indian mind to whom Western morals and life are unintelligible has misunderstood Western civilization and therefore in his eyes the West is always morally lower than his East, when he has continually witnessed "Dance, Drink and Daring" all for 75 per cent. Dollar worship and 25 per cent. Dears and Darlings! Nothing can be suggested to prevent good or bad effects of one civilization on the other when both are destined



to be in close contact in the 20th century. Strife is the essence of evolution. Without wars there can be no world and without misunderstandings, misrepresentations, there can be no wars. It can never be helped.

(b) Except 2 films ("Shakuntala" and "The Light of Asia") I know of no other Indian films shown abroad. They of course did not misrepresent India. Foreign films mis-representing Indian civilisation are possible but cannot be traced nor prevented, because "in one's home one is the king of all he surveys, whose right of misunderstanding (others) there can be none (from the others) to dispute"!

28. This is answered in Question 24 (c) and (d).

29. Yes, in special cases only. For example, films produced with the object of educating masses on sexology, venereal diseases, physiology, etc.

30. No; Children have every right to enjoy every picture whereby they also come to know how other adults are, what do they do in the world, what the world and a worldly life are.

31. Yes, provided the powers of censorship themselves are not misused but exercised liberally to the advantage of all parties concerned.

32. Not completely satisfactory in Bombay so far as my information goes. They say it is very strict. I might suggest that a new censor committee should be appointed every year who may consist of members representing—

- (1) Government Officers.
- (2) Educational institutions.
- (3) Literary circles.
- (4) Cinema Proprietors.
- (5) Public.

33. (a), (b) and (c) Partly yes and partly no. It all depends upon the merits of the films and the reasons of the censors to throw them off.

34. I again invite the attention of the committee to my scheme suggested in answer to Question 19, under which a Central Board Provincial Board, Executive Officer and all such parts of the machinery will be necessary to bring a systematic control in the Cinema world.

I cannot lay down the constitution of such Boards or their functions which all depends upon the provisions of the Cinema Act if accepted to be necessary in present conditions.

35. It is not satisfactory in the matter—

- (a) of number as well as duties and powers.
- (b) why only as a Censor of Films?

Under my scheme he will have to do many other things as a stage and screen officer whereas the work of censorship should go on a committee recommended by me which shall be called and arranged by the officer. He may participate in it as a Government representative.

36. (a) Not satisfactory. Inspectors must be honest, psychologists and then close students of literature more than holding mere degrees.

(b) If a regular censor committee is newly appointed every year, I hope gentlemen of standing will always be forthcoming on little gains to work as censors.

37. (a) and (b) Centralization of Government control contemplated under my scheme will remove any such possible defect.

38. I do not know of any such instance.

39. No.

40. They should be censored because I have seen many such advertisements offensive to public taste, misleading the public, circulating falsehoods, defaming other rivals. I can give instances. This work may be taken up by an Advertisement Expert specially employed for the purpose by the Cinema Department of the Government who may call for the submission of all advertisements for evening announcements before 12 noon and return them duly

censored before 2 p.m. and for next day's announcements before 3 p.m. and to be returned duly censored before 6. Of course, his powers must be limited to strike off the only portions which are *apparently*—

- (1) offensive to anybody or religion.
- (2) defaming anybody.
- (3) with mystery, stunts likely to mislead the public.
- (4) lowering rival productions or exhibitions.

41. Yes, and I have noted it above.

42. Yes, I have already suggested to take in one representative from the trade, and every cinema company will be getting its turn to send its representative.

43. I have said about it in answer to a previous question according to which imports can be controlled by the screen officer dispensing with the class of importers.

(b) As for exports. I am keen to see that Indian films should be so encouraged as to get them a demand from abroad.

44. Public bodies and the Press can assist the formation and the work of the Cinema Department suggested by me by continuous propaganda in its favour which can be won by the Government if they will be given some voice in the creation and management of the Department, as well as some advantages.

45. (a) Yes. To some extent; I suggest that instead of censoring ready made films and (in case of disapproval) putting the producers to enormous loss of money and labour it is better to censor the stories and scenerios in their original forms. This will reduce the chances of disapproving a whole or portion of a film which will only be required in case of vulgar acting.

(b) Yes, as suggested by me in my scheme.

### Oral Evidence of Mr. J. D. KHANDHADIA, Bombay, on Friday, the 18th November 1927.

Q. I have perused your statement. It is only as a public citizen that you come forward?

A. I am one from the millions.

Q. You want to speak for the public?

A. Yes.

Q. You are not interested in either exhibition, distribution, or production of cinema?

A. No.

Q. You go only as a visitor to the cinemas?

A. As a visitor as well as a journalist.

Q. What journal are you connected with?

A. I edit one sex magazine called the "Gunsundari." It is a ladies' magazine. It has been conducted for the last 5 years. My joint editor is a barrister whose name is Mr. J. N. Varma.

Q. You are a citizen of Bombay?

A. Yes.

Q. And you have been in Bombay for a long time, or are you a native of Bombay?

A. I am here in Bombay for the last 10 years, and during this period I was also for about 3 years in the Jheria coalfields.

Q. Have they got any cinema in the coalfields where you were?

A. There was one theatre.

Q. Is it now going?

A. No. It failed.

Q. Why did it fail?

A. For want of money. The proprietor started it with only a few hundred rupees in his pocket. He tried to get some audience in the coalfields, but owing to certain reasons he could not make money from the exhibition.

Q. Do you mean the cinema was not popular in those fields?

A. It was popular. One reason for failure (I heard from the proprietor himself) was that the landlord who rented the place to him for the exhibition of these films, etc., charged Rs. 500 a month. It was only a very small place which could not accommodate more than 100 persons.

Q. What sort of place was that?

A. It was only 2 or 3 rooms in a big building rented for cinema purposes.

Q. It was a residential building?

A. Yes, residential quarters.

Q. It was used for the exhibition of cinema?

A. Yes.

Q. Do they not require a license or something of that sort?

A. I do not know exactly whether he took a license from Government or not.

Q. How many years did it work?

A. For one year it worked. I do not know the present condition of that cinema because I am here for the last 3 years.

Q. Is it working still?

A. I cannot say.

Q. You say it was not a paying concern when you were there?

A. Yes.

Q. What sort of pictures were exhibited there?

A. Formerly he tried to introduce western films, but subsequently he changed his programmes and provided Indian films because they were quoted very low from Bombay.

Q. Do you like Indian films yourself?

A. I do not like the films that are shown at present.

Q. Do you go to cinemas where Indian films are shown?

A. No.

Q. You do not go there at all?

A. Except when I am invited on certain occasions.

Q. But do you go to the western films by paying or on a free pass?

A. Sometimes I pay and at other times on a complimentary pass.

Q. Which more often?

A. By paying.

Q. To western films?

A. Yes.

Q. But to the Indian films you go on a complimentary pass?

A. I never paid for seeing Indian films.

Q. Where do you live?

A. In Bombay, near Girgaum Back Road.

Q. I think there are a number of Indian pictures shown in the place where you live?

A. In my locality there are two cinemas. They do not show Indian pictures.

Q. Girgaum Back Road is the place where you could say the middle class educated people, graduates, clerks in the office, and such other people live?

A. Yes.

Q. And you have not got any cinema there showing Indian pictures?

A. There are two cinemas....

Q. The Krishna Cinema is in Girgaum?

A. That is in Girgaum, but Girgaum Back Road is distant from that cinema.

Q. Take the locality where the Krishna Cinema is. Is it not a place where educated middle class people like you live?

A. Yes.

Q. There they run only Indian pictures?

A. How can you say that people of the same locality go and visit the same cinema. It does not depend upon residence in that locality; nor that the people there only frequent the same cinema. The cinema may attract audience from other localities too. It depends upon the picture.

Q. There are no null hands there?

A. No.

Q. Who are the people who go to the Krishna Cinema? Would you not describe them as educated?

A. No. I would describe them as semi-literate classes.

Q. Even graduates? Take a man, for instance, who is employed in the Government offices or commercial houses, clerks, superintendents of offices, such sort of people live there? How do you describe that class? Whom would you call educated class?

A. Matrics and onwards.

Q. I believe people living in Girgaum Road are mostly people of that class having education?

A. About Matric.

Q. But surely you will describe them as of the educated class? You would not describe them as of the illiterate mass? It is supposed to be an intelligent ward in the Municipality.

A. Whatever it is, I will classify them in the semi-literate class.

Q. They do not go to the Krishna Cinema?

A. Certainly they may go, but that does not mean residents of the same locality.

Q. Where do those people go whom I have in mind?

A. Some go to the western films and some to this picture. I have seen the audience at the film "At the Clang of Fetters" and I have reason to believe that all the semi-literate classes were flocking there.

Q. Not the upper class, but the middle class population do go there?

A. Yes.

Q. There they go to these Indian theatres?

A. Yes.

Q. So that people who do not go to the Indian pictures are those who are absolutely westernised more or less and those living like Europeans, dressing like Europeans, and fond of European society? I suppose those people do not go to these Indian pictures?

A. Not necessarily. You can also find westernised people at Indian pictures, but I have put the percentage of it at about 5 in my statement.

Q. You think the Indian film industry should be encouraged?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think that Government should take any steps for that purpose?

A. Yes.

Q. You guide public opinion as a journalist. Do you think the Indian public will demand that Government should embark upon taking some steps to encourage the Indian film industry?

A. It is my opinion.

Q. Not only should, but you think they will be failing in their duty if they do not?

A. Yes.

Q. Is that your view?

A. When the industry cannot look after itself then Government should interfere.

Q. You think the industry cannot look after itself as it is?

A. Judging from the present standard of film they are producing I say so.

Q. To improve the standard before the public taste is spoiled, or they acquire a habit for certain things, and it is up to Government to guide that taste. Is that your point of view?

A. If it is within the powers of Government.

Q. So that although the Indian public may be satisfied with what they get, you think that Government should help the industry in order to produce better films?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you believe that the quota system can be introduced in order to help the Indian industry?

A. I think it is a question of detail. If the principle is accepted that the Government should intervene in this sphere, then it may be taken up.

Q. But still what is your view as a public man? Do you think, for instance, that cinemas which now show western pictures should be compelled to show a certain proportion of Indian pictures? Would you approve of it as a journalist?

A. No. I won't.

Q. Then how do you expect to encourage the Indian industry?

A. They should stand on their own merits.

Q. Try to capture the market if they can?

A. Yes.

Q. What is it you want the Government to do?

A. Government has to give aid. . . .

Q. Financial?

A. Yes, financial as well as others. For example, if one film producer wants to show certain films. . . .

Q. You mean facilities of access to Government public property?

A. Yes.

Q. Such as Courts, fortresses, roads, harbours and various other things which go to make a good show?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you want any improvement in the tariff?

A. No.

Q. You think the industry can thrive very well if these facilities are given? Do you want any financial aid to be given in the shape of cheap loans?

A. Yes, and I would suggest that the amusement tax collected by Government should be utilised for the elevation of this industry.

Q. What is the guarantee that the people will use it for that purpose? Supposing you give a loan to a proprietor, what guarantee is there that he will use the money for improving the studio?

A. I think the Government should see that it is applied for the purpose.

Q. You mean in the shape of buying machinery and all that?

A. Yes.

Q. You want more banking facilities rather than actual financial aid?

A. Banking facilities.

Q. You want banking facilities to be given?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think the western cinema has any bad effect on the public?

A. Not at all.

Q. Are you a parent yourself?

A. Yes.

Q. And do you think they have no bad influence on the Indian public mind?

A. They have bad effects as well as good.

Q. The good preponderates? A very great man in this country says that the cinema is productive of all evil, whether it produces good or not is a matter to be proved. Do you share in that opinion?

A. It may be his opinion but I think Government should not pay any heed to such opinions. These are individual opinions.

Q. Are you satisfied with the censorship?

A. Yes.

Q. You do not think that any improvement in the machinery of censorship is needed?

A. Except in the constitution of the Censorship Board.

Q. If you are satisfied with the present method of censorship, why do you want a change in the constitution?

A. So that every party concerned in the industry may get representation.

Q. If the work is well done why do you want a change of machinery?

A. It is well done from the public point of view, but I think certain parties are aggrieved by the constitution of the Board because they have not got any representative on the Board.

Q. It is not a governing body. It is to do a particular work and that work is done well according to you, and why do you want a change in the constitution? A mere desire to be represented on that body?

A. That is the only defect.

Q. To satisfy what?

A. To give a chance of representation to all the parties concerned.

Q. This is particular work which is done in the public interest and is done very well according to you?

A. Yes.

Q. Then why do you want to make an experiment by inventing another body which may do well or not.

A. I should not be pessimistic about that.

Q. Still you want to make a change?

A. To satisfy certain parties who have been unjustly dealt with by the constitution of this Board.

Q. You have no reason to be dissatisfied with the present method of censorship?

A. No. I have no complaint.

Q. As a public man and as a journalist?

A. Yes.

Mr. Coatsman: If you had two complimentary tickets, one for a western show and another for an Indian show, and you could go only to one, which would you go to?

A. I will go in the present conditions to the western film.

Q. What is your reason for that?

A. The films, the Indian produced films, are defective not only from the technical point of view but from the literary point of view also.

*Q.* Would you personally prefer to see an Indian film?

*A.* No, not in the present conditions.

*Q.* Supposing the standards were exactly the same and all the rest of it?

*A.* In that case, as an Indian I must certainly go to the Indian film.

*Q.* And would you prefer Indian films to deal exclusively with Indian subjects?

*A.* Certainly they ought to deal only with Indian subjects.

*Q.* You would like to see that?

*A.* Yes.

*Mr. Neogy:* With regard to censorship is this your point that the present censorship is good but at the same time it is capable of improvement?

*A.* Yes. So far as the constitution is concerned.

*Q.* And in what way would you improve the constitution?

*A.* I have suggested that it should be made as representative as possible.

*Q.* What are the interests that you would like to see represented which are not already represented?

*A.* I imagine, for instance literary circles are not represented.

*Mr. Green:* You have a Professor and Principal of a College. He is an educational officer.

*A.* I would draw a line of distinction between educational and literary men.

*Chairman:* What is the distinction?

*A.* Education is a different thing from literature.

*Mr. Neogy:* A literary man is quite different from a professor of a college? You mean a man who is engaged in producing literature, that is the sort of man you have in mind?

*A.* Yes.

*Chairman:* Are journalists literary men?

*A.* To some extent.

*Q.* Why is it you want a literary man to be associated?

*A.* To judge the literary value of the drama.

*Q.* And for that purpose you are not prepared to depend upon the judgment of a mere professor of a college?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Though he may be a very highly educated man?

*A.* He may be.

**Written Statement of the representative of Messrs. RAMCHANDRA & CO., Sole Booking Agents for the Kohinoor Film Co., dated the 14th November 1927.**

1 Yes. I am connected with the distributing agency of the Kohinoor Film Company, Bombay, a film producing company of long-standing in Bombay and which is a pioneer concern in this industry in India.

2. (a) I refer to the city of Bombay.

(1) Indians, who have taken English education, patronize cinemas to a large extent. Parsis, men and women, mostly frequent cinemas exhibiting foreign films. Among the Muslims there are a very few who could be put in this group, and among them too only the males frequent cinemas. They divide equally their patronage between Indian and foreign films. Lastly among the Hindus, whose number is large, the condition is the same as that of the Muslims. Such Hindus, when they go with their families, go to see

Indian films only. Educated Indians who have not taken English education, but still are well connected with the public affairs, and there are many such among the Hindus and some among the Muslims, see Indian films to a very large extent.

(2) Among the illiterate classes might be put the working population. In this group the majority of the males visit the cinemas which exhibit Indian films.

(b) Attendance at cinemas exhibiting Indian films has been rapidly increasing during the last 2 or 3 years, while the cinemas exhibiting foreign films are having thinner and thinner audiences, except on Saturdays and Sundays.

At cinemas exhibiting only Indian films, in the high class localities the educated and the illiterate class are equal in attendance, while in the Northern part of the city, i.e., Byculla, Parel and Dadar, the working classes predominate.

(c) These classes form about 25 per cent. of the audiences.

3. The most popular films with Indian (and particularly illiterate) audiences are those dealing preeminently with Hindu Mythological subjects. These attract Hindu visitors to a very large extent. Films depicting subjects of love and romance from Muslim and Persian romantic literature as well Muslim historical topics, and which have some dance scenes, are very much liked by Muslim spectators. Next in importance of popularity, generally in the whole of India, and in increasing popularity with city working classes and society of lower strata, come films depicting scenes of fighting, riding, etc., i.e., scenes of adventure and stunts, love scenes, and comic dramas.

In a general consideration for the whole of India other classes of audiences besides the above mentioned are of little importance since their likes or dislikes do not determine the popularity of any films.

There are three classes of exhibitors.—(1) those showing exclusively Foreign films (2) those showing exclusively Indian films; and (3) those showing both Indian and foreign films.

As regards (1): They are catering adequately for the audiences which patronize them, and which are generally composed of Europeans, Christians and highly educated Indians (mostly Parsis and high class Hindus).

As regards (2): On the whole they are not catering adequately for their Indian audiences, which are chiefly composed of higher and middle classes as well as the working population.

As regards (3): The same remarks apply to this class of exhibitors as to the class (1) and (2) with regard to foreign and Indian films respectively.

The reasons for the exhibitors not adequately catering for the Indian audiences are:—(1) The paucity of a regular supply of such Indian films as would gain an average amount of popularity; (2) As a consequence of reason No. 1 the enhanced rent charged for really good and high class Indian films; (3) Exhibitors of Indian films have generally, under the circumstances, to show all Indian films of the producers whether they are good, ordinary or stuffless. The present system of booking Indian films in vogue in this country is a faulty one. The Indian films are at present distributed either by the producers themselves departmentally or through their sole distributors. These sole distributors or Booking Agents, as they are called, are, under the terms of agreement of appointment as such, prevented from distributing the productions of any other film company other than the Company with which they are under contract. The producers invariably make it a term of their contract with their distributors that the latter should book all the productions of the former, present or future, good, bad or indifferent. Moreover the distributors invariably make it a term of their contract with exhibitors at every place that the exhibitors are bound to show all the films of that producer at that place; and only when this term of agreement is accepted (which they have to accept) the exclusive supply for that particular place of all first run pictures is guaranteed to that particular exhibitor.



5. The majority of exhibitors in the mofussil start work with insufficient capital. The theatre is generally taken on lease and after locking up some of their capital in providing for the machinery (projectors, dynamo engine, etc.) only a small amount is left for working purposes. On the other hand every producer, as a term of contract for supply of films, demands from every exhibitor a deposit of a sum from Rs. 200 to Rs. 500 as security for the exhibitor duly carrying out the terms of contract. The exhibitor, in order to keep up the supply of new films at every change of programme, has to make arrangements for the same with three to six producers, and finds therefore, a great difficulty in providing security deposit money for all producers. As a result of this difficulty, he has to show second run pictures of his producers, whenever there is a shortage of first run pictures.

Moreover most of the Indian film producers produce on an average one film per month, while some even take two or more months for producing one film. Excluding the cities where the change of programme is weekly, in the mofussil the change is bi-weekly, that is one picture for four days and the other for three days. At small stations the exhibitors are to change their programmes every two-days. Under the circumstances, the supply of good Indian films is limited, the exhibitor has no other recourse except to show all the films of his producer without reference to the quality of films and that too not only at first run ones but even second run and further run ones.

5. Indian produced films depicting Indian life are now-a-days readily available to exhibitors.

(a) All of them are not of a particularly good quality for reasons stated in answer to question 4.

(b) It is not possible always to produce exclusively good as well as popular films. At times certain films, though of good quality, do not become very popular, while some ordinary films, because of some innovation or a new stunt, gain more popularity than their merits deserve.

(c) It is ordinarily more profitable to show an Indian film in comparison to a foreign film at cinemas of the second and the third group (see answer to question No. 4).

The following are some of the successful films:—

- (1) Singhgad, (2) Netaji Palkar, (3) Krishna Janma, (4) Balkrishna, (5) Fairy of Ceylon, (6) Gulbakavli, (7) Lankadahan, (8) Typist-girl, (9) Sati Sardarba, (10) Treasure of Kalyan, (11) Shirin Farhad, etc.

6. (a) Yes, at present films of topical Indian news have little attraction but if interesting topical films are regularly exhibited like the Pathe topical Gazette, they might create a new taste with Indian audiences.

(b) 1. Love-romance appeals to all classes. Films depicting stories from national and historical literature as well as those bringing out social evils would appeal more to the educated classes.

2. Films having fighting and other such scenes of adventure as well as mythological pictures would appeal more to the working and illiterate classes.

7. Regarding British troops, it does not appear that any difficulty is experienced in obtaining either in cities or in cantonments films suitable for them. Regarding Indian troops, they come mostly from the lower middle classes and workmen and so their likes and dislikes are the same as that of the latter, and so the remarks under question No. 3 hold good in their case.

The question of suitable and popular films is dealt with under question No. 8.

8. (a) No.

(b) The main difficulty besetting the industry in production and the means of assisting it are as follows:—

The very low standard of education among the middle classes and the appalling illiteracy among the working and the lower classes of society is

the main difficulty. These classes constitute the majority of those on whom the exhibitors depend for good box money. Films produced to attract these classes have necessarily to be of a very inferior standard so that they can be easily understood and followed by them. As regards the import, acting, expression or emotions portrayed, the humour conveyed or the moral sought to be impressed, such films of inferior standard can have no market outside India. Moreover owing to differences in language, social customs, manners, dress, traditions, history and religion of the peoples of the various communities and of the different provinces, most of the Indian films fail to make an equal appeal to all in the provinces. Generally the films produced in one province appeal more strongly to the people of that particular province, whereas the same would fall flat on the audiences in other provinces. Owing to these difficulties Indian producers cannot maintain their hold over audiences beyond the limits of their provinces, or at the most beyond India. Of late the Indian population in East Africa has been showing a liking for Indian films. This new field for Indian films has been opened recently and is likely to be a very good and profitable field for exploiting Indian films as well as for advancing the prospects of the Indian film industry. Moreover if suitable theatres at moderate rates are available in Indian localities for Indian pictures, a continuous demand will surely be created. There are also prospects for Indian pictures on Indian mythological subjects and romances in the Federated Malay States, Siam, Java and Sumatra, as there is a considerable Indian population who feel themselves at home and in touch with their Motherland when viewing such Indian films. Further the mythological traditions of the aboriginal inhabitants of these places have a close relationship with those of the Indians. But until these new fields are sufficiently developed, the Indian producers will have to depend mainly on Indian audiences for income and therefore they cannot afford to spend more on their pictures. Costly productions in the present state of the exploitation of Indian films are out of question.

Owing to the necessity of retrenching the cost of productions, producers cannot engage the services of efficient employees in the several branches of the production, i.e., the photographic department including the camera-man and the laboratory-man, staff of actors and artists both male and female, the technical as well as the Art department, the Story and the scenario-writers and the materials like the wardrobe and the others stock in trade and the studio department. The whole equipment has necessarily to be very meagre in quantity and inferior and unsuitable in quality. Consequently historical films with hardly a few notable exceptions or films requiring the presence of large number of men such as in crowds in procession have never been attempted successfully. As a consequence the films produced are generally of ordinary quality and merits and do not run for more than week in Presidency towns, where really superior Indian films have been known to run for four weeks continuously before packed houses. As the films do not run more than a week, fresh pictures have to be hurried through in order to keep up the supply for the theatres concerned. These various difficulties interact with a deterrent effect on the standard of Indian films.

The pioneers of this industry in India were usually some in-experienced enthusiasts without sufficient capital of their own to start the concern efficiently as happens in the case of new and infant industries. The capital of such people was soon exhausted and this necessitated their having to approach financiers, who had, for that purpose, to be offered sufficient inducement to risk their money in such a new venture of an uncertain nature as to its prospects and progress. With the exceptions of some shrewd financiers here and there who are making cent per cent. profit, even the financiers landed themselves into difficulty. The experience of such stranded financiers debars others from entering the field of film production or assisting the producers. From time to time attracted by the gaities of the studios, and the large crowd visiting the Indian theatres, the new people embark upon the production with scanty means to be soon disillusioned.

In order, therefore, to place the industry on sound basis, all the different departments stated above have to be reorganised and brought to perfection.

Provision of financial facilities only will not help, as that would in the end simply be a burden on the producer. It is only when the income of the producers is increased that the industry can be said to have been firmly established. It is here that the really capable and enterprising distributors or film exchange men can improve the situation. The producers' difficulties resulting in their ordinary pictures are also a handicap to the distributors. If a regular supply of good pictures is assured, the distributor can and ought to exploit the supply to the utmost of his ability, finding out fresh fields for exploitations and strengthening his hold on the existing fields. Experience has shown that, provided the pictures handled are good, the distributors run no risk in expending money on necessary publicity and propaganda. The distributing department of the producers and of the distributing agencies of different producers are at present not well equipped for the work. Few of them have the statistical information essential for their work, of the tastes of the public of India and outside nor the enterprise to open new markets for the films in their charge and push them there. They have no knowledge how to take care of films and publicity materials in their charge and utilise them to the best. The efforts for the publicity of Indian films are not a tenth of those made for the publicity of foreign films. Hence no wonder that the returns for the picture and the market for them do not show the same expansion they ought to.

As regards the exhibition of Indian films, the conditions of this branch of the industry are better than those of the other departments in connection with some of the theatres in the presidency towns, though it cannot be denied that there is room for improvement in sitting accommodation, ventilation, etc. The theatres in the mofussil and especially the districts are, some of them, in wretched conditions. The lowest class of spectators has to squat on the ground and the benches and chairs in the other classes are in a wretched condition and infested by bugs. There is no proper ventilation and most of the theatres are merely corrugated tin-sheds. There is very little open space surrounding the theatre and no garden to please the eye and to attract the public. There is vast improvement to be made as regards the projecting room staff. The operators are an unknown quantity to the distributors. In foreign countries only certified operators are placed in the charge of the projecting rooms and this is essential for the safety of the public as also of the films. The exhibitors do not utilise the services of publicity managers specially trained in the art of cinema advertisement.

Lastly, there is a great handicap from which the Indian film industry has yet to suffer and it is the want of trained actors to work as stars. This industry in India is still in its infancy. It is absolutely necessary to train promising actors, especially females, for this work. Unless trained and educated men and women take to film acting, there is little hope of Indian films competing with foreign films at least as regards quality, that is, expression acting, etc. Now-a-days it often happens that when a producer has spent a lot of time and money on a promising artist on the staff the producer suddenly learns that the specially trained actor or more often that actress has been weened away by a rival producer or that specially trained artist would take up a clear queer attitude in not giving satisfactory work unless his or her salary is increased. This is a serious obstacle in the work of a Producer.

9. Good Indian films are not always easily obtainable or readily available by exhibitors at reasonable or moderate rates (in comparison with the low rates of foreign films). Good foreign films are readily obtainable to any large extent at any time at cheaper rates.

The reasons for the above situation have already been set forth. There is no monopoly or any tendency to monopolise the supply or exhibition of any films.

10. None of these systems exist in Indian to a great extent. Owing to the plentiful supply of foreign films, "block" booking cannot be enforced in the case of such films; nor in the case of Indian films, because of their paucity as well as uncertainty as to their quality and the time of release.

"Blind" booking is prevalent in this country to a partial extent in the case of some of the foreign films as well as Indian films of a few noted producers.

In the presidency towns certain theatres do exist where mostly first run pictures are exhibited but even these theatres are not always able to adhere to this practice and so at times they have to show second run pictures.

There are no "key" theatres in India and so the success or failure of any films cannot be judged from its success at any particular theatre.

As none of these systems exist in India, it is no use discussing advantages and disadvantages of any one of them.

#### 11. No.

At times some producers in order to widely advertise any of their jewel productions give a trade show. Except in such cases there is no system of previewing any Indian films in this country. This state of affairs is due to the difference in the system of bookings in India and foreign countries.

In India the system of previewing films is not possible or likely to be introduced until the terms of contract between the exhibitors and the producers (which generally bind the exhibitors to show all the pictures of the producers) are radically changed. Moreover, this will not be possible until the number of Indian productions increases to such a great extent that the exhibitor will not have the necessity to stick to particular producer only.

12. Though the Amusement Tax (known in Bombay as Entertainment Tax) is passed on to the spectators by the exhibitors, it is however probable that if this tax is remitted a substantial amount thereof would go to the exhibitor and help him in making both ends meet which in so many cases at present they are not able to do. In the mofussil and in smaller theatre or theatres where mostly the lower classes are full up, this tax is in no way a handicap to the exhibitor, as the sale of the tax-bearing tickets at such theatres is very limited.

13. The present customs duty on imported finished films at 15 per cent. is ultimately borne by the public. The general public would not get any advantage if this duty is repealed as the saving would go to the pocket of the importer or the exhibitor. In any case this customs duty on finished films is very helpful in promoting this rising indigenous industry in its present nascent state. This duty approximates to about 50 per cent. of the invoice cost of open market pictures; and so if the duty is repealed these foreign films will compete with Indian pictures to a greater and serious extent, and reduce the margin of profits to the Indian producer and the exhibitor of Indian films. The production of Indian films will be greatly encouraged if the customs duty on the imported finished films is doubled and a large portion of such increase is utilized towards the reduction of the 15 per cent. import duty on blank or unexposed films.

The other materials connected with the film industry are comparatively of less importance from the point of view of expenses and are common to many other industries and so any reduction of duty on such materials will not help this indigenous production of films.

14. Yes. Though at present there is no substantial demand for films for educational purposes, or for any of the above mentioned purposes, if the Government Educational Department popularises methods of education by means of the cinema there is likely to be a slow increase of Indian educational films and this will consequently give more work to the Indian talents in this industry and help the producers. Public health, agriculture and such other general topics have begun to be propagated by the help of the cinema films but until the use of such films becomes very widespread the production of such indigenous films will not be materially accelerated.

There is no demand for such films from the public at present, more so because they have not yet grasped the usefulness of such films. Moreover such films are in other countries exhibited free of charge to the public. The wider use and production of such films in India can be accelerated by Govern-

ment educational and public philanthropic agencies and not by the present sort of producers. The demand would arise when these agencies bestir themselves in this direction.

15. No, the present conditions in this country are not favourable to the development of an Indian film producing industry on a large scale. As stated previously, unless and until outside Indian market are exploited on a large scale and a steady rise in the income from rentals and sales of Indian films is assured it would not be profitable to produce costly films in large numbers. Moreover at present intelligent cultured and well educated Artists are not forthcoming, so that they can be properly trained and even remunerated adequately. There is an abundance of natural sceneries and historical places just fit for films. Also there is a vast store of legendary and traditional as well as historical literature from which stories and subjects can be very well adapted. Places for locating studios and laboratories with climatic conditions approximating that of such ideal places in foreign countries are also available. One thing is necessary and that is the purification of the moral atmosphere prevailing near about the studios. Further, specialised technical training in the various departments is also an urgent want which will have to be supplied by getting sufficient number of Indians trained in that Art in foreign countries. After the indigenous industry is placed on sound basis and is technically advanced as well as improved in quality, it will be possible to exploit the other markets in Asia and later on to export some of the super productions to Europe and the West.

16. No, at present there is a dearth of Indian producers, directors, actors, actresses and scenario-writers with sufficient technical knowledge and resources on whom the country can depend for a substantial output of films of real competitive value or films satisfying the requirements of high-class cultured Indian audiences. They would even fail to satisfy any more the lower classes and the working population in case the standard of education is raised among them so as to render them capable of viewing critically the films exhibited.

If a large number of all the above classes of workers in this industry have an opportunity of obtaining practical and technical knowledge of the respective functions under foreign experts their enterprise, resourcefulness and adaptability will be sufficiently developed and this present deficiency will be considerably reduced.

17. Yes, sufficient capital will be forthcoming in India provided the circumstances and the state of the industry are sufficiently improved as suggested in reply to question No. 16 and a confidence is created in the general investing public regarding the stability of the industry, which will be possible on the opening up of the Asiatic market and later on of the other markets. At present owing to the inability of the indigenous film industry to stand on a level of even little competition of films of other countries, our industry is always in need of financial support. Indian capitalists of sufficient means fight shy of the industry. Not only they are afraid to invest their money in the production of films but they are even afraid to finance the struggling producers as they do not see the promising future for the indigenous industry under the prevailing circumstances and consider the security offered to them of a very speculative and questionable character. The few financiers who have entered the industry as financiers, induced by the alluring returns offered, have been hard hit owing to misplaced confidence in the industry and in those who are in charge of the same.

18. The State can, by both legislative and administrative action give effective encouragement to enterprise in the Indian film production. Legislative machinery can be moved to give protection to the Indian industry by building a high tariff wall against imported finished films, to the extent of at least 30 per cent. Consuls who are representatives of this Government could be asked to supply information to Indian producers regarding the possibility of exploiting markets outside India at present, in Africa and Asia for Indian films. The Government may allow the Indian film producers approach and admission to places of historical interest to such as caves, forts, etc., and places

of ancient archaeology which will help to increase the duty and quality of Indian films. The Railways and Steamship Companies should be asked to issue tickets and carry goods of Indian film producers and exhibitors at concession rates.

19. The cost of film production in this country has necessarily to be very low owing to restricted nature of the market for their product. Moreover as the resources of the Indian producers are very limited, they cannot spend a large amount on any film. The best Indian film would not cost more than Rs. 25,000 for eight reels. In Europe and America the cost of films is very high and they can very well afford to spend such fabulous sums as one million dollars because the circuit for the films extends over 17,000 cinemas in America and as many in Europe; and even the audiences in those countries have the cinema habit developed to a great extent.

The Indian producer cannot expect more than seventy-five cinemas all over India to exhibit his productions and even out of these, some of the cinemas in the mofussal have an average collection of Rs. 50 daily.

20. (a) Suggestions and proposals made under question 18 do not involve very great expenditure on the part of the Government but even the expenditure that will have to be incurred will be quite justifiable. A developed Indian film industry will be great help to the Government for purposes of propaganda and increasing the literacy and general information and knowledge of the general public in the country in the course of time. Further, a developed film industry can help the country to eradicate social evils. Under the circumstances, expenditure by Government in this direction would not at all be unjustifiable.

(b) As suggested under question 18 the Government may double the import duty on finished films.

21. Creation of such a monopoly as suggested will fail in its primary objects. No doubt the State may help and encourage production of films confirming to moral standard, provide a centralised and neutral distributing Agency, inaugurate the use of teaching and propaganda films as well as improve the censorship of films but it will be impossible to create and furnish a fair market. In the first place the venture will be costly and uneconomical as it will have no competition, and will be unremunerative and so a burden to State revenues. It will be looked upon with suspicion by the general public and even by the producers. It will kill healthy private competition and create unnecessary ill-will against Government. As suggested previously the Government by legislative enactment can make provision to ensure the production and exhibition of films confirming to moral standards, to inaugurate teaching and propaganda films and, for such purposes, tighten the grip of Censorship. With the good will of the producers and the general public the Government will be in a position to popularise their propaganda films while the creation of such a monopoly as suggested in this question will antagonise these sections against the Government.

22. No, India should not participate in the policy of Imperial Preference such as the one outlined by the Imperial Conference. India is not in a position to participate in any such encouragement because such participation will not serve any of the purposes stated.

(a) Such a participation would not help the development of Indian film industry. The Indian film industry has made much head way during the last few years (without the help of such preference) so that at present it has been able to reduce the demand for American films by about 50 per cent. Foreign serials of fight and adventure were the order of the day a few years back but now their import has fallen off considerably. There was an attempt to maintain high rentals for foreign films, and also to raise it in some cases, but it failed and the rentals for foreign films have been reduced by 25 to 50 per cent. from their former level. So far India is concerned, the proposal made by the Imperial conference will mean a preference for British Empire films in India which will replace American, German and other foreign films. Indian films will not, in the present state of the industry, be in demand in any other parts of the British Empire except where there is an Indian

population. On the contrary, by such an action India will antagonise the Western countries like America, France and Germany towards her, who might retaliate by increasing the prices of raw films and other accessory materials for which Indian at present depends to a great extent on them and for which in such a situation Indian cannot depend upon British Empire products, having regard to the quality and price.

(b) Such a participation will not make India better known or better understood in other parts of the British Empire for the simple reason that there will be no guarantee that as a result of the adoption of such a policy alone Indian's films will be in demand in other parts of the British Empire. And if some Indian-made films will be sent to the other parts of the Empire, there is every likelihood that such films will make India more misunderstood. Similarly, there is not the least possibility of such a policy creating the demand for Indian films from the rest of the world.

(c) Such participation will not improve the standard of Western films (films of non-British origin) shown in India. Such Western films are not manufactured with an eye on the Indian market, which contributes only one per cent. to the income of any such Western film. Such films are primarily intended for the rich and cultured American and European audiences, and are shown in India a year after their release there.

23. (a) This is possible to a very little extent only and that too when there is such a keen demand on the part of the peoples of one part of the Empire, regarding such information of the other parts. At present there might be a limited few who might be curious to have such information, but they can satisfy their desire and curiosity by other more efficient and cheaper means. And for the curiosity of such a few the production of special films will be mere waste and madness. There is no evidence of a general desire for such knowledge about India or the activities of the Indian Government on the part of any other part of the Empire.

(b) Consideration of measures in this direction is out of the question.

24. (a) No such class of films has been exhibited in this country having a demoralising or otherwise injurious effect upon the public.

(b) There is no general circulation of immoral or criminally suggestive films.

(c) (Requires no reply.)

(d) Censorship as at present is more than adequately strict in the case of "Sex" and "Crime" films.

(e) No, there has been no increase of crime in any province in India due to the cinema or because of the cinema activities.

(f) The question does not arise.

25. Yes, due to the differences in social customs and outlook between the West and East, a different set of rules for censorship of such films is necessary.

26. (a) No, the censoring in cases of films likely to offend the religious susceptibilities has been adequately strict.

(b) Certain scenes in the following have been unnecessarily censored as likely to offend the Mahomedans although the same were historically true, and their exclusion had the effect of marring the representation of the subjects treated. The film from which such scenes were censored is the Sharda film "Veer Durgadas".

27. (a) No. None of the foreign films have any tendency to misrepresent the Western civilization. Moreover the illiterate classes do not visit the exhibitions of Western films. As such films do not create misunderstanding there is no question of making any suggestion to counteract the same.

(b) I have not seen any, but have heard of some films having been exhibited in foreign countries which did misrepresent and create prejudices against Indian civilization. Such films were "Bronze Bell" and "Nav Lakha".

28. No class of films shown in this country has or had any bad effect on children or adolescents. The other questions do not arise.

29. Such certification would, on the contrary, create a curiosity similar to that for the forbidden apple, and would lend undue publicity to such films. All films should be of such a nature that they might not be considered to be objectionable for people of any class or age. The Censor should be trusted to be very careful in the discharge of his responsibilities.

30. No, I could not favour any such prohibition; even for children under any particular age such a prohibition will somewhat affect the income of the exhibitors. Hitherto the censorship here has been sufficiently strict which does not warrant the need for any such prohibition. As suggested in reply to the previous questions, if a set of instructions is prepared for guidance of the censors there will not be any necessity for making the exhibition of certain films exclusive for people of any age or class.

31. Censorship of films is an effective method to guard against the misuse of films. But in any way Censorship does not act as a check in these matters.

Censorship here at present is positively annoying to the Indian producers for reasons discussed under question No. 32.

32. The present system of censorship in Bombay is not only defective but overstrict in the case of, at least, Indian productions and from that point of view is unsatisfactory. A constitution of the Board of Censors should be amended and definite rules should be laid down for the guidance of producers and censors as discussed in the question 33.

How whimsical the Censorship is may be seen from the fact that scenes deleted from some films have been allowed to be exhibited in other films. The reasons underlying the decision to cut certain scenes or omit certain titles are also unintelligible or flimsy. The producers are asked in historical films to cut essential scenes which may be deemed to be improper from the Western viewpoint though as a matter of fact the number of people with such a viewpoint visiting such films is negligible. An inspection of the records of the Censors would convey an idea of the inconsistency and idiosyncracies of the irregular and air-embracing nature of the procedure of censorship. As a result of such censorship the continuity of story is often broken and the audience is left in doubt as to the point aimed at by the writer of the story.

33. (a) Yes. An unnecessarily and unreasonably strict and haphazard nature of censorship, the sort of which exists to-day, does interfere unreasonably with the recreations of the people. The serene flow of a romance or the realistic description of some historical event is at times suddenly interrupted by some incongruous incident marring the beauty of the whole plot and due to this the public is often disgusted. The intelligent portion of the public easily recognise in such incongruity the hidden hand of the censor. And a certain scene considered improper by the censor has been cut off by him, the producer cannot leave the gap unfilled without ruining the whole plot, and so he is asked to put in some other scene which naturally would not fit in with the story, and hence the resulting incongruity. The illiterate people will rush to blame the producer. All the same, by such whims, an otherwise popular picture would lose half its value.

(b) Not to a very great extent, but certainly the audience will not be highly pleased with otherwise good pictures and thereby the result will be that the rising tide of the cinema habit will be checked to an appreciable extent.

(c) Such unduly strict censorship has been interfering with the freedom required for artistic and inspirational developments of this industry. Unduly censored films lose all the entertainment value of a good film.

It is therefore absolutely necessary that a set of definite rules should be laid down for the guidance of both the producer and the censor making mention of, in a general manner, as to what class of scenes or suggestive acting is to be avoided, and as for further check the all-embracing Penal Code should keep a vigilant watch.



34. No. I do not advocate the replacement of the present provincial Boards by a single Central Board. Such a change would cause a great inconvenience to the trade in different provinces, as well as be a sort of useless expenditure. The Provincial Boards are in a better position to judge the local condition than a Central Board can ever be. I would advocate a Central Board in addition to present Provincial Boards as a court of appeal by the producers, exhibitors or the public against the Provincial Boards. The Central Board might have its head-quarters at Delhi or Bombay and should include a representative of the Legislative Assembly, a representative of each of the Educational and the Police or the Home Departments of the Government of India and one representative nominated by each of the Provincial Boards. This Central Board should be constituted by a legislative enactment. The Provincial Boards should also be reconstituted and the non-official element should be increased in ratio of 3: 1. Amongst the non-officials should be a representative from the producers and one from the cinema exhibitors, one representative of each of the important communities in each of the provinces and two non-officials nominated by the Government.

The newly constituted Provincial Boards should function as at present; and the Central Board should have appellate and mandatory powers. The Central and Local Governments should not interfere in the working of these boards. The Central Board must function at its monthly meetings. The expenditure involved in this suggestion would not be much.

35. (a) No, the system of nomination of non-officials by Government is not satisfactory and wrong in principle and the percentage of non-official element requires to be increased to 75 per cent. as suggested under question 34.

(b) No, that would be costlier than the present system. Moreover the idea of the Board having merely advisory powers is wrong in principle. The Board should have powers of final decision. Officers under the Board should be bound to carry out the orders and decisions of the Board.

36. (a) Yes, the principle of the system is satisfactory, but the working of the system, in the absence of a definite set of rules for the guidance of censors and producers, is very unsatisfactory, and often annoying and unjust to producers. Mere higher educational attainments should not be considered as sufficient qualifications for censor inspectorship; over and above that they must have intimate knowledge of the progress of the film industry in foreign countries as well as in India, a knowledge of the limitations and resources of the industry in India and of the general temperament of the cinema-going public.

(b) Two members of the Provincial Board should always be associated with the inspectors to form a quorum for censoring any film. Two members would be easily available for such purposes.

37. No further safeguards are required as the present safeguards under the Act are adequate for preventing the exhibition of films which may be objectionable locally, though passed by a Censor Board in the province of origin or first exhibition.

38. The following films were passed in Bombay but were objected to in the mofussil:—

(1) Razia Begum, (2) Badhra Bhamini, (3) Pati Bhakti, (4) Shah Jehan and (5) Veer Durgadas.

39. No.

40. No censorship is necessary in the case of posters, handbills and advertisements of cinema films and the Indian Penal Code might be left to keep a watch over them.

41. The general moral tone of the films exhibited in India, specially Indian productions, has not been of an objectionable nature, and so the question of specific improvement does not arise.

42. This question is already discussed under question 34. The producers and exhibitors must have some voice in determining the set of rules for

the guidance of the Censors and in supervising the work of the Censors in accordance with these rules.

43. None whatsoever. The present control is satisfactory for the present.

44. Public institutions in the moral betterment of the people can very well be useful as a check against the dissemination of undesirable films whether foreign or Indian, and in maintaining a particular moral standard, though such a standard might not always be popular with the cinema-going people.

The Press as at present situated in India has to depend on advertisements for its existence, and cinema advertisements are an important source of income for Newspapers. Under the circumstances the Press cannot be expected to be watchful critic of films.

45. (a) Any Government control over production of films would be an unnecessary and harmful interference in private enterprise and freedom of execution of harmless cultural ideas, without any corresponding benefits.

(b) At the present stage of industry it has not been found necessary to register and license films producing agencies nor to periodically inspect film studios.

**Oral Evidence of Mr. HIRALAL MOTIRAM and Mr. V. H. CHAMMAD, Representatives of Ramchandra & Co., Sole Booking Agents for the Kohinoor Film Co., on Friday, the 18th November 1927.**

*(Questions answered by Mr. Hiralal Motiram.)*

*Chairman:* I have not been able to read your written statement, as you have just handed it in. There is nothing personal in it, I suppose?

A. No.

Q. You are distributors?

A. Yes, for the Kohinoor Film Company only.

Q. Is it a firm or a partnership?

A. It is a partnership.

Q. How many of you are partners?

A. Three partners, one Mr. Ramchandra M. Bhatt, and there are two Ahmedabad people.

Q. Both of you are here?

A. We are the manager and assistant manager. The partners are in Ahmedabad.

Q. You only distribute Indian films?

A. Not even Indian films, but only Kohinoor films.

Q. How many pictures in a year do you produce?

A. For the last one year they produced only one a month, but formerly they produced 18 pictures a year.

Q. Do you do any other business, Ramchandra & Co.?

A. One partner, Ramchandra, is a landed proprietor and the other partner is a cinema theatre owner in Ahmedabad. They have advanced money to the Kohinoor Film Co., and they have been appointed as agents of the company.

Q. You think Indian films are getting popular?

A. Yes.

Q. There is a great deal of demand for them?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you know Poona well?

A. I have been there many times.

**Q.** How is it Indian films are not shown there?

**A.** There is one difficulty. There is a company called the Hindustan Film Co. here. There are only one or two theatres in Poona showing Indian pictures and the rest are controlled by Madans who are showing English pictures there. Of the above two one is in the cantonment and the other is in the city, called the Aryan. The other is the Bharat Cinema in the cantonment. They were showing Indian pictures but they have quarrelled with the Hindustan Film Co., and the company does not supply them Indian pictures, and that is why these pictures are not shown there. Our pictures are shown there occasionally.

**Q.** You say it is the want of theatres to show the Indian pictures?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You frequently visit Poona?

**A.** Yes. The proprietor of these cinemas take pictures from us now and then.

**Q.** You think both in the mofussil and in the towns the Indian pictures will become very popular?

**A.** Yes, except in the cantonment stations where, of course. English pictures are shown

**Q.** Of course, you have got to cater for those people there residing in the cantonment. Do you think this Indian film-producing industry is bound to progress?

**A.** It will progress, provided some improvement is made in the technique, finances and so on.

**Q.** What is the difficulty about finance? I hear it is a very paying proposition. If you refer to anything, please don't be personal.

**A.** The finance is available, but the thing is that the future prospect is not satisfactory, that is to say, people are afraid to invest in this because they do not know what will happen in the future. As things are, the industry is not making progress on the technical side. Only we are taking advantage of the liking of the people for Indian pictures, but we are not making any progress.

**Q.** You are not certain of a market?

**A.** We are certain of the market in India, but supposing we produce a very costly picture we are not sure it will be taken outside India.

**Q.** There is much room in India itself?

**A.** There is a little more room, because in the mofussil stations the people are very poor. The tickets are 1, 2 or 3 or 4 annas at the utmost and they get Rs. 30 or 40 per night. They cannot afford to give more than what they do now.

**Q.** Even in the Bombay city I saw the Lakshmi Cinema the other day and I do not think they made more than Rs. 40 or 50 a night.

**A.** They will pay Rs. 30 or 40 if it is a mythological picture, but if it is an ordinary picture, they won't be able to pay even Rs. 20 a night. Poor people follow the thing more easily if it is an Indian theme. The people in the mofussil are very poor.

**Q.** Do you think that these sex films are popular with that class of people?

**A.** These poor people will never see sex pictures. I have experienced it in the Venus Cinema, also in the Lakshmi Cinema. When a kissing scene is shown the ladies will turn their heads away.

**Q.** That is the Indian habit, they do not like it?

**A.** No, they don't.

**Q.** These things are more shown to the so-called educated classes than to the illiterate classes?

**A.** They do not object.

**Q.** What do you think should be done to encourage the Indian industry?

A. Our chief suggestion is we should have a market in Africa. Recently for the last one year our pictures are going to Africa where there is a large Indian population. You have got a large Indian population in East Africa.

Q. Being out of touch with their mother country, if they see these pictures they feel more at home?

A. Yes, when they see Indian dress, Indian titles and so on, they feel very much at home.

Q. What is the difficulty about sending them out?

A. We have just begun. Every month pictures are being sent out. But the difficulty is these theatres are controlled by people showing English pictures and they give the theatre on hire for only two or three nights in the week at exorbitant rates.

Q. You have not been there yourself?

A. No. In a year or so we hope that they will be able to hire theatres practically for showing Indian pictures.

Q. You mention East Africa.

A. There is Abyssinia, Kenya, etc.

Q. There are the Straits Settlements.

A. We have not tried there. We have got applications from people there, but the terms do not agree. We have to send a representative there to supervise the thing, and also we cannot trust the people there. Supposing we send a film there and it is not returned, we are not sure what to do.

Q. What facilities do you want?

A. Facilities in the shape of information from the consuls in these places.

Q. Now you have got an Agent General in Africa.

A. That is for South Africa. This is East Africa.

Q. He could give help in that direction also.

A. Also in times of difficulty we can seek his help.

Q. What about the Indian industry here?

A. It might go on like this.

Q. You do not want anything further to be done?

A. By the Government?

Q. Yes.

A. From the Government—we think it better to have experts here, some four or five, in the different departments, such as, laboratory, technique, photography, and so on, so that they could train a large number of people here.

Q. You would advocate a studio where Government can have these people?

A. Only, say, 4 or 5 experts here and their services should be available on payment to different studios.

Q. Do you object to Government having a studio where it can produce films for educational purposes?

A. That won't pay.

Q. That will be one of the inducements for them to have the experts you want?

A. We want experts to improve the technique.

Q. If you had a studio and had experts they could be called upon to assist?

A. They will mind their own affairs then.

Q. Make it part of the duty of the experts to guide and instruct people here.

A. I do not think that educational films will pay here for a long time to come.

Q. It won't pay but it will be useful. If you introduce them for schools and the masses.

A. The masses cannot follow them.

Q. You may leave it to the experts in the line to advise what will appeal to the masses. You want it to be in the hands of the industry itself?

A. Yes.

Q. You want private enterprise to deal with it?

A. Yes.

Q. That is why you fight shy of the Government studio?

A. It won't pay. This industry in the hands of Government would not pay.

Q. I do not mean to say the whole of the industry, but only this portion dealing with educational films, or propaganda films. They won't compete with you.

A. We do not produce educational films.

Q. Without competing with the trade, supposing the Government had a studio for their own purpose, they could have these experts whom you want?

A. So far it is advisable.

*Colonel Crawford:* Any such Government studio would be absolutely up to date with all the equipments necessary, it would have experts in each particular line, and the production of educational films would not fully occupy such a studio?

A. It would not.

Q. It would be capable therefore of assisting the producing companies which wanted better technique for a particular picture; the companies could send their people for training; and it would also act as an inspiration to the private producer. Experiments will be carried out by Government and the private producer will take advantage of it.

A. There may be a model place for training on the technical side, but as regards artists, the Government would not require artists for educational films. The acting line has to be improved also.

Q. Some of the educational films should be capable of entertainment, and you can get educational films shown in a story.

A. Artists would have to be imported also.

Q. Do you mean to say that you do not need an enormous amount of acting skill?

A. There are very few artists here. The artists should be capable of expressing the emotions which are exhibited on the screen.

*Chairman:* Do you think the western cinema show has any evil influence upon the public?

A. No, because the censor deals with them.

Q. You think the censorship is adequate?

A. Yes.

Q. Are you satisfied with the censorship of Indian films?

A. We have a little complaint to make. Sometimes they are very strict and unreasonable. There are no set of rules.....

Q. Why do you say so? Are you not familiar with the rules at all?

A. We have no rules on what ground a picture is considered objectionable.

Q. You are interested in the production side?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you mean to say you have not got a copy of the rules? Do you mean to say that the Kohinoor Film Co. have not got a copy of the rules?

A. We have got rules, but not definite on what ground pictures should be considered objectionable.

Q. It is stated there on what ground objection should be taken. I do not think you have read them?

A. I sent for a copy from Calcutta also.

Q. There is a censorship board here and why did you not ask them to give a copy of the rules under the Act?

A. I think too much discretion is given to the censor.

Q. Do you mean to say that the studios are not supplied with a copy of the rules of the Censorship Board?

A. So far I have not seen any. I enquired also and I could not get them. Our complaint is that too much is left to the discretion of the Censor.

Q. The rules ought to have been circulated to every studio. It is perfectly true that what is suitable and what is not suitable is not defined in the Act nor in the statutory rules, and it is very difficult to define it. But the Bombay Board have published their suggestions to their Inspectors of films and I can say that certainly a copy should have been sent to the Kohinoor Film Co. You are their agents and you are a distributor.

A. We have not received such copies.

Q. Apparently they are not published. Even the other people who came here and said so.

A. Even the Act is not available. We asked the Government press here and we enquired also at Calcutta and there was no reply.

Mr. Green: Do you mean to say it is out of print?

A. Finally I got a copy from the Censorship Board at Burma.

Chairman: This production, is it a paying proposition?

A. Yes.

Q. And still you spoke of financial difficulties.

A. It is like this. Persons who are in the industry have not got money of their own, most of them. Most of these people, except one or two old firms, are doing it on borrowed money.

Q. Is there any difficulty in borrowing?

A. There is difficulty because the return asked for is exorbitant. They have to pay good interest and also commission.

Q. Then you want banking facilities?

A. At the usual rate of interest charged to merchants.

Q. Could you not start a co-operative society of your own?

A. No. The thing is the person who advances the money must have trust in the industry that the money is safe and that his income is safe.

Q. What can be done for that?

A. There should be a market.

Q. What can the Government do in that direction?

A. By improving the production of the pictures.

Q. You have said you want expert aid. What else do you want?

A. That will do.

Q. Do you believe in the quota system?

A. No.

Q. That is, that every theatre should show a certain proportion of Indian films?

A. By compulsion we do not expect much.

Q. You do not believe in it?

A. No. Naturally Indian pictures are liked by Indians only and you cannot compel other people to see them and it won't pay.

Q. But how do you expect to find a market? How many theatres run Indian pictures in the Bombay Presidency?

A. We distribute to the whole of India. I have travelled mostly in southern India and a little portion of northern India.

*Q.* Only a very small percentage if you take the whole country exhibit Indian films?

*A.* In the chief cities Indian pictures are shown. They are shown also in the mofussil stations.

*Q.* There the bulk of them are western pictures?

*A.* Because there are so many cantonment stations, and in the big cities there are very many theatres catering for the educated people, the Europeans and so on.

*Q.* You do not believe in the quota system?

*A.* No.

*Q.* Do you think conditions in the studios are sufficiently good as they are?

*A.* Not so. We have to find fault with them, but gradually they will improve.

*Q.* Do you think a sort of inspection and registration of the studios will be helpful to the industry?

*A.* That won't help.

*Q.* Do you think it will harm the industry if you compel registration?

*A.* It will be an unnecessary interference.

*Q.* You want to secure a market, and whatever is necessary to secure a market for the Indian films should be done?

*A.* Yes.

*Mr. Green:* You do not believe in the quota system I take it because it would not benefit the Indian producers?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Is your reason this, that if you compel, say, the Excelsior, to exhibit Indian films no audience will come and therefore they won't pay you anything?

*A.* They won't pay us.

*Q.* You would rather confine such films to Indian theatres in Indian localities which would take those films and pay you?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* I am interested in that point because it has not been brought out so far. Various people have said, 'let us have Indian films in every theatre', but that point did not occur to me. I am grateful to you for suggesting it.

*A.* It is an instructive and exhaustive document, the statement we have sent. We have been in the line for the last six or seven years.

*Chairman:* I was only saying that we had no time to go through your statement now. We will surely read it later on.

*A.* It is a comprehensive document.

*Mr. Green:* On page 7 of your statement, you say "If a regular supply of pictures is assured....." The trouble is there is not a sufficient number of Indian films.

*A.* As I told you we produce about 12 pictures a year. Supposing we want to exploit the African market, the theatre man will ask us whether we can supply him with so many Indian pictures throughout the year. We cannot promise him and we are only one company. In our agreement we have obliged ourselves not to distribute any other pictures. So we cannot supply other pictures. If we could produce 24 pictures a year we could make a contract with the theatres in Africa that we could supply all the year round.

*Q.* Is this a correct way of putting it? The industry in India is so much in its infancy that really production on the scale sufficient to make distribution a real trade has not yet occurred?

*A.* It is correct to say such production has not really occurred.

*Q.* And until you can get as large a supply of Indian films as you could distribute you cannot occupy all your time?

*A.* No.

**Q.** You can expand your business immensely if you have a large number of films to deal with?

**A.** Yes.

**Colonel Crawford:** But you confine yourself to only one producing company?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** If you act as distributor for all Indian producing companies you would then require something like 72 films a year?

**A.** But the difficulty is those people would not trust one single distributor.

**Q.** Supposing you as distributor were to buy the picture, you say, "I will take the risk of getting profit out of it. You produce the picture and I will buy it and I will arrange for the distribution."

**A.** If you buy it outright it is all right, but people do not sell.

**Mr. Green:** They won't sell them?

**A.** Yes. Recently there was one example. A person wanted to buy the sale rights of a particular picture. The picture as a matter of fact cost Rs. 10,000. The producer wanted about Rs. 23,000 for the sale of the rights for India, Burma and Ceylon. The prospective purchaser has refused the business, because he has seen the picture and he thinks it is not worth while to pay so much for the picture.

**Q.** Has it ever occurred to you as distributor to offer to finance productions?

**A.** We are financing this company.

**Q.** You are actually financing it?

**A.** We have advanced two lakhs and that is why we have got the distributing agency.

**Q.** Your company is financing the Kohinoor Film Co. and distributing its productions?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Has it occurred to you that you might finance the other producers also?

**A.** This producer would not allow it. He says, I should confine my activities to this Kohinoor Co. only.

**Q.** Supposing a public company is floated with adequate capital that company might be able to get any number of films. The Chairman has suggested a co-operative society. I put it in the form of a public company.

**A.** The producer would not trust that. The producer will think that the distributor will show patronage to other company's pictures and not his own.

**Q.** The trade is so much in its infancy?

**A.** Yes, and jealousy and so on. There is want of confidence in other people.

**Colonel Crawford:** I would like to know what your functions are as a distributor?

**A.** We receive enquiries for the booking of films. We distribute these films upcountry, collect the hire and get back the picture and pay the income after deducting our dues to the producer every week.

**Q.** Do you keep agents for watching the box office returns in the theatres?

**A.** In some cities in India, for example, take the cities of Bombay, Surat, Ahmedabad, Karachi, Madras, Calcutta we distribute on a percentage basis, say, 30 or 40 per cent. of the box office income. In the smaller places we give on hire system, Rs. 40, 50 or 60 per night. In the case of the percentage basis we do not send our representatives to watch certain theatres because we trust them. If we think that a man is not trustworthy we send our own man.

**Q.** You do not have to have an agent for the purpose?

**A.** No.



*Q.* I understand you to say that in the larger cities you have a hire system on a percentage basis and in the other places a fixed hire per night?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* You are convinced that there is a big demand for Indian films in India to-day?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* And you do not think that the existing producing companies can meet that demand at present?

*A.* No.

*Q.* There is plenty of scope for them to expand on the present demand?

*A.* Yes, with a little better pictures. Some more companies producing pictures of the standard we are producing can go on all right.

*Q.* Are the Indian companies, say, mainly producing what you would call a cheap type of film, costing something about Rs. 10,000? Do you think that they would benefit by producing more expensive types of films?

*A.* I know they are not all producing pictures costing Rs. 10,000. There is one company which makes pictures for Rs. 5,000.

*Q.* That company which is producing Rs. 5,000 pictures also makes a good income.

*A.* It makes mythological pictures, with very few scenes and very few actors.

*Q.* As regards exhibitors in India you have one big circuit of theatres, the Madan circuit?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* You have no chance at the moment of getting your Indian films there? Is there anything to prevent you from getting your films taken by Madans?

*A.* They do take them. Sometimes in Calcutta and Rangoon they show them but the percentage they give is very low. Even then we are willing to give them; but for certain reasons of competition they do not want to advance our interests. They have shown our pictures, but in the least paying theatres. They have other theatres where they could get good audiences for Indian films but they won't show them there but will show them in other localities where Indian films have not the same high drawing power as other pictures.

*Q.* Do you think there would be any opportunity for expanding the trade in your pictures in the mofussil by the establishment of another circuit of theatres. One gentleman suggested you should have 500 theatres in the mofussil made of corrugated iron.

*A.* Most mofussil theatres have corrugated iron. In some there are no chairs even and people sit on the ground. The ground slopes in one place and is high in another. Corrugated iron is considered best. Some mofussil cinemas are housed in tents and there are also gunny bag theatres. It won't pay to have these theatres in the mofussil.

*Chairman:* Are there such theatres?

*A.* Even now. Last year I went to Ajmer. The theatre was surrounded by gunny bags and it was the only theatre in Ajmer where they showed the cinema actually every day. Now it has been closed.

*Colonel Crawford:* It didn't pay?

*A.* Yes. We asked for Rs. 35 a night and even then the fellow could not pay. He lost some money and then stopped. In India you find, in the mofussil, touring cinemas always pay. There are about 9 or 10 of them in Southern India. What they do is this. They stay for one or two months in a particular place and they have lorries in which they put their apparatus and all those things. Supposing they come to a place with a population of 10,000. They will show some films for one month or two months. If the population like them they will stay on for two months and then shift 30 or 60 miles away. There are like that 10 or 12 companies in Southern India; in Northern

India also but not so much, but in Southern India 10 or 12 companies tour about especially during the big fairs.

Q. But that does not give so much scope for your films if they go on showing the same film for one or two months.

A. Well they are able to pay us Rs. 50 a night.

Q. Do you think the cinema habit is growing in the mofussil?

A. Oh, yes. But it cannot pay all the year round.

Mr. Neogy: You are the distributors for one particular company. Are you aware of other such distributing companies?

A. Oh, yes. A. Ahmedbhai & Co. are the distributors for the Excelsior Company; then Mayashanker Thakore & Co., for the Sharda Film Company. The Krishna Film Company distributes its own pictures. The Hindustan Company also distributes its own pictures. The Imperial Film Company have not got distributors of their own but distribute their own pictures; but they have financiers.

Q. Some do their own distributing, others employ agents, and there may be cases in which the distributor is also an exhibitor.

A. Sometimes. There is the Krishna Film Company for instance which has one theatre here and one in Ahmedabad.

Q. Which system is best from the point of view of the Indian cinema industry—a combination of all three, production, distribution and exhibition?

A. A combination of production and distribution is advisable but not of exhibition. Then the fellow won't know where he is.

Q. And the other distributors you have mentioned, may I take it that they also advance money to their respective manufacturing companies.

A. Yes.

Q. So the distributors are also the bankers?

A. Yes.

Q. Now in their banking dealings do they deal exclusively with the distributors or do they have banking arrangements with other private parties.

A. For instance in this firm of Ranchandra & Co., the partners advance money to different persons also.

Q. No, I am thinking of the producer company's finances, whether they are financed exclusively by you or they depend upon independent finance also.

A. They have to, because the distributor or the financier will only lend to a certain extent looking to the security of the films. If the producer wants more money he goes to somebody else.

Q. May I know on what basis you advance money. Do you do it on a percentage basis of the cost of a film?

A. No, in this company we advance a certain sum of money in the beginning having regard to the cost of the production.

Q. Before the picture is undertaken?

A. No. What happened was, like this: this distributor came on the scene about 3 years ago. At that time this producing company was distributing its own pictures. The distributor thought this company had 21 pictures to mortgage to him and this advance would be sufficient; so he advanced that money for a certain period, and the arrangement was that the income of those pictures was to be given to the distributor to enable him to produce other pictures, and those other pictures were also considered to be subject to the mortgage.

Q. What security do you take for your money, merely the films produced?

A. The films already produced and the films that will be produced.

Q. No other security?

A. In our company we have the security of the whole studio.

Q. The whole property is mortgaged to you?

A. Yes.

**Q.** And what about the other distributing agents?

**A.** They mortgage their films only or some borrow on personal security only. It depends on the credit of the producer and his way of dealing.

**Q.** If you don't want to answer my next question you may not. What rate of interest do you think would satisfy a distributor to advance his money like this?

**A.** It is like this. In the present state of the industry distributors while advancing money to producers think they are taking a chance, in short, they are speculating, so they consider two or three per cent. per month reasonable.

**Q.** To be a legitimate rate?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** If they were sure that their money was safe even 1 per cent. per month would be enough to attract financiers?

**A.** That is the case in two or three companies which have distributors.

**Q.** I suppose your pictures go to almost all the provinces in India?

**A.** Yes, from Peshawar to Colombo, Madras, Rangoon, etc.

**Q.** We have heard that there is a good deal of objection to films produced in a particular province because of certain provincial peculiarities. Is that your experience?

**A.** That is so. In fact our artists' dress is always according to the Gujarati system. So in spite of our pictures being better than other Companies' pictures, the public in other provinces sometimes prefer the latter. For instance, we produced a Krishna Film and the Maharashtra Company produced another; but because the artists in their production were dressed in Mahratta fashion, people in South India preferred to see their picture instead of ours. In the same way people in Northern India prefer our pictures to Maharashtra pictures.

**Q.** So it is not altogether a question of provincial peculiarities but one of local peculiarities, because the Gujarati fashion would appeal to Northern India but not to Maharashtra although Maharashtra is included in the same province?

**A.** Yes, not provincial but rather something like racial or social peculiarities, where the mode of living and dressing is different. But it can become provincial also because Madras is different to Bombay, so Madras people like the Mahratta style of dressing. Our pictures go in Rangoon because there is a big Gujarati population there; so they prefer our pictures.

**Q.** How long have you been in this company?

**A.** Ramchandra & Co. took over our business two years ago, but before that one of the partners was financing it for two years.

**Q.** Do you think that the conditions of this trade are sufficiently encouraging for distributor financiers like you to come forward more and more?

**A.** Yes, they are coming forward, but they cannot satisfy the needs of the producers because the producers' needs are more.

**Q.** What do you mean? If the return is sure, and the return seems to be very satisfactory from your point of view, why is it that sufficient money, sufficient banking facilities, are not forthcoming?

**A.** Because the first thing is that as you see the security is not considered sufficient. For example they lend for a period of one year, two years or one-half year, and they don't know if the money will be repaid by that time. If they lend a certain sum to-day the producer is not prepared to repay that sum because as the months go by he produces more pictures and requires more money and the financier must be able to finance that also, to provide further finance. At the end of two years supposing the industry is in a bad state then the money is lost.

**Q.** How much would a film producing company require in a year?

A. That depends on the number of pictures he produces in the year. As you know the initial expenditure is quite different, for cameras, dresses, etc. Apart from that the cost of a picture is returned in four or five months. Supposing we produce a picture which costs Rs. 15,000. Then in four or five or six months at most the cost is returned.

Q. What is the total amount that a distributor has to invest in this concern. That is what I am anxious to know.

A. The distributor has to go on investing gradually.

Q. But what is the total amount that a distributor has to find in order to finance a producing company?

A. It may be two or three lakhs; but if it is three lakhs according to present conditions then I do not think the producer will require more money because by then the income of the pictures will be sufficient to finance the production of future pictures.

Q. Supposing a producing company were to start building a studio on up to date lines at a cost of Rs. 50,000 or a lakh or even more, would you advance money on the security of that studio for the purpose of building it up?

A. Say only 25 per cent. because the dresses are all spoilt. Of course there is the camera but other things are perishable. After producing three or four pictures with the same dresses, the dresses are no use, they are finished and have to be replaced. Only the camera, printing machines and such like paraphernalia are of any value.

*Colonel Crawford:* Only one other question before you go. Do you as distributors get statistics from the various cinemas in which your pictures are showing giving you some idea of the popularity of your particular pictures with the audience? Do you learn from that the particular stars that are a draw and the particular subjects that are a draw?

A. No; what we do is this: in the case of pictures given on a percentage we are in a position to know the houses they get. In the case of the others running on fixed hire, we do not know and we cannot say. But it often happens that when these exhibitors send for pictures they mention "kindly send us such and such pictures or pictures featuring such and such a star"; from which we know that this star is in favour.

Q. You do get that sort of thing now?

A. Oh yes.

Q. You see we have been told that the American industry definitely gets lists from its cinemas showing what stars are in favour.

A. We do not ask for such lists here but we know there are certain stars who are very popular.

Q. Indian audiences also have a liking for certain stars?

A. In Northern India there is a fashion; we have a particular actress Miss Sultana and they are so pleased with her acting that they send baskets of fruits to us to be forwarded to the star. She is very popular all over India.

### **Oral Evidence of Messrs. N. G. DEWARE and DWARKADAS NARANDAS of the Kolinoot Film Co., on Friday, the 18th November 1927.**

*Chairman:* You say you were a photographer here before?

*Mr. Deware:* Yes.

Q. For how many years have you been a photographer?

A. My father has got a studio, it is a very long standing firm, it has been in existence for the last thirty years. My father is a photographer and artist, and I was an apprentice under him from my boyhood.

Q. What general education have you got?

A. I studied up to the Senior Cambridge. I did not pass it. Then I went to England and to the United States. I passed through England.

Q. You did not take any introductory note?

A. No, I did not. I joined the College at Illinois, it is near Chicago. Effingham is the name of the place where the college is situated.

Q. Is that school run by the University, and does it impart instruction in the Cinematograph Industry?

A. The Columbia University only gives post graduate courses, but now I learn that they have established a regular school.

Q. How many students were there in the school where you took the post graduate course?

A. There were forty students, and they were mostly Americans.

Q. We want to know whether for a class of 40 boys they used to run a school to give lessons in cinematograph work, directing, photography as well as story writing. I suppose those are the subjects. What are the subjects taught in the school?

A. Laboratory work and photography, but in the University higher courses were given.

Q. Which is the institute you mention?

A. I mean the New York Institute, where I got my preliminary training before I took the post graduate course.

Q. In what subjects did you get training in that Institute?

A. I got instructions in cinema generally, in story-writing, scenario writing and directing, particularly.

Q. What about acting?

A. I did know something of it before I went to America, because I was an amateur actor here.

Q. Does that Institute give training in acting?

A. No. But now I am told they give lessons in acting as well. At that time they were not giving lessons in acting.

Q. So everything connected with the cinema industry is taught there now?

A. Yes.

Q. Then what about the post graduate course? What was it chiefly concerned with?

A. It was chiefly concerned with directing and story-writing.

Q. What about laboratory work?

A. They could not at that time teach laboratory work there because they had no funds to start this branch.

Q. Had you to pay any fees?

A. Yes, I paid 45 dollars for six months for the post graduate course. In the Institute I paid 150 dollars for a six months' course. I studied there for one year and six months.

Q. Did you enter any studio?

A. I was in the laboratory. I went there through the recommendation of a professor, and I remained there for a month or so, but that was just enough for getting a general knowledge of laboratories.

Q. You did not go to any particular studio?

A. I saw the studio as a visitor, and not as an apprentice.

Q. How often did you see the studio as a visitor?

A. I saw it several times. I must have visited the Universal Plant in New York at least forty times.

Q. Do they allow visitors freely inside their studios?

A. In America there is colour prejudice, and they were rather suspicious about me.

Q. Now, let us go step by step. First of all in the institute did you find any difficulty in admission?

A. I had no difficulty.

Q. And in the post graduate course?

A. I had no difficulty because I had good recommendations from the professor. On the contrary I used to receive 15 dollars while learning, I was a worker there. I never went there with the intention of learning.

Q. In the studio which you used to visit, do they allot particular days for visitors?

A. I went there with the recommendation of a professor.

Q. I suppose you visited several studios?

A. I visited the Universal Studio and several others.

Q. You did not go to Hollywood?

A. No.

Q. That is the training you had in the universities there? How much money did you spend?

A. I spent nearly Rs. 22,000 during about two years and six months. Of course, with that sum I toured all over Europe. That includes my travelling expenses all over Europe.

Q. You did not enter into any contract with any studio. You simply went over there and took your chance?

A. Yes.

Q. What did you do after returning?

A. In the beginning I joined my father's studio. Then I started taking topical films for Indian States. Then Mr. Dwarkadas was kind enough to give me a chance in his company. Prior to my joining him, my cousin was in his company, but he retired, and after his retirement I was taken in.

Q. We are not curious to know about your personal affairs. But what do they pay you?

A. They pay me Rs. 550 in all, and for that salary I have to write English titles, direct and do camera work.

Q. Are you satisfied with the stories and scenario writing here?

A. No, I am not.

Q. They are mostly written in the vernacular? Are you familiar with the vernacular or have you forgotten it?

A. I have not forgotten my vernacular, but I am not at all satisfied with the stories written here. But fortunately Kohinoor have got a good scenario writer who is writing very good stories.

Q. Has he any tendency to copy from the western stories, or does he write original stories?

A. He writes original stories. He does not copy from the western stories, though the other companies are all doing it.

Q. So your story writer writes original stories with the aid of such material as is available to him?

A. He does not know a word of English. He understands English but he cannot speak English. He could quite follow you when you speak. He cannot read English books.

Q. So he is an oriental scholar, a Sanskrit scholar?

A. Yes.

Q. And perhaps he is a Gujrati or Marathi scholar, what is it?

A. He is a Sanskrit and Gujrati scholar.

Q. How many stories has he written?

A. He has written very nearly 200 stories, of which he has written about 125 exclusively for the Kohinoor company. He has entered into a contract with the Kohinoor Film Co., and so he cannot write stories for others.

*Q.* Is that contract for any particular period?

*A.* Yes, for two years he is under a contract with the Kohinoor Co.

*Q.* You being familiar with the west, I suppose you are satisfied with the plots he gives you?

*A.* Yes. I am entirely satisfied with his stories.

*Q.* What is the best story he has written for the Kohinoor?

*A.* In my opinion, "Shirin Farhad" and also the "Educated Wife". His latest story is called "Be gadi Moje" or "Pleasure Mad".

*Q.* Do you think it is a good story?

*A.* Yes. It is a very good plot. He also wrote "Gulbakarali," and that picture has made a good name all over India. We got the largest receipts from that picture.

*Q.* Does it depict Indian life?

*A.* It is a fairy tale.

*Mr. Neogy:* Is it not a fact that these are not Indian subjects and they have been treated in other stories already just like English stories? There is no originality in it, is it not?

*A.* Of course, there is no originality in it, but as far as the plot is concerned, they change the costumes. The plot of the story called "Shirin Farhad" is quite original.

*Chairman:* I wish the Committee could see the picture called "Pleasure Mad." Where can we see it?

*A.* You can see it at Karachi. Our picture is going to Karachi to-morrow.

*Q.* Pleasure Mad is rather an alluring title, is it not? Now, you were a photographer before, and your visit to New York and other places has done you a lot of good, has it not?

*A.* I wish the Americans had extended their hand of fellowship a little more when I was there, and in that case I could certainly have learnt a little more than I have done.

*Q.* You think they did not take you sufficiently into their confidence, you mean they did not give you their trade secrets, and so on?

*A.* They were rather suspicious of me. They were afraid that I would rob them of their secrets. Really, they were afraid of me in some way or other.

*Q.* It is a very important matter to decide what we should do to get expert assistance. Do you think there will be the same jealousy in America?

*A.* Yes, I should say a lot of it.

*Q.* When you were a student there, were you fairly treated in the classes by your class mates?

*A.* I was treated very well, and there was no colour prejudice shown against me.

*Q.* It is only in the studios there is colour prejudice?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Are other visitors allowed to see their studios?

*A.* In those days they were not allowing foreign visitors.

*Q.* You took some introduction from a professor, and notwithstanding that you found difficulty in the studios?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* At the same time, were there other visitors like you?

*A.* No, I was the only visitor.

*Q.* I heard that there were lots of visitors going, so much so that their work suffered there?

*A.* It may be so in Hollywood, but not in New York, because in New York people generally are very busy. There time is money.

**Q.** Probably those interested in studying the art or desiring to work as apprentices might have gone there as visitors?

**A.** Not many.

**Q.** Was there any difference made between you and a coloured man, I mean between English students from England and yourself in the studio?

**A.** English students were regularly employed as assistants, although the salary was very small.

**Q.** Were there any students from other countries, like England, France or Germany?

**A.** In those days there were many German students and Italian students.

**Q.** You found there were English students in addition to American students and they were treated quite differently?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Did you try to get any education in England during this time?

**A.** I got a very good letter from the manager of the Kodak Co., who are one of the biggest dealers in photographic goods in England, as I wanted to see their studio and if possible to work in it as an assistant in England, but I am sorry to say they did not give me admission, notwithstanding the introduction from a man in the trade. I must however say that Kodak Co. in America allowed me in their laboratory in Rochester and within a few days they showed me several things which were very helpful to me.

**Q.** You mean the introduction proved useful in America but it proved useless in England?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** If you wish to be examined in camera, we can do so, because I want you to answer frankly. I don't suppose you would be somewhat reserved in answering because your proprietor Mr. Dwarkadas is here?

**A.** I can answer freely, Sir.

**Q.** It is rather an important matter, and I should like to have your frank views. I have just got a letter from a young man to-day who wants to enter this profession. He is a graduate. He says that the conditions are such that respectable young men find it difficult to join the cinema line. I got the letter from a young aspirant to this line who is 23 years of age. He has marked the letter 'Personal' and therefore I cannot give you the name. He says that the conditions are such that it is difficult for respectable young men to join the cinema trade in India. Do you agree with it?

**A.** I don't see there is anything wrong in the line.

**Q.** We want to advise the producers in their own interest. The producers must understand that they must make the profession and conditions respectable if they are to thrive in the trade?

**A.** I want respectable people to come forward and join us. So far such people have not been coming forward and hence we have to associate with people of a lower status.

**Q.** I dare say you are aware that there is a prejudice against your studios generally?

**A.** Yes, because we have to associate with girls of lower status and so on.

**Q.** Don't you think that the producers must improve the conditions in order to attract young and respectable people?

**A.** Provided respectable young men will come forward.

**Q.** I put the question publicly, because I want to give a public answer to the young man who has written to me asking me to make a recommendation to the studio proprietors that they should make conditions more attractive for respectable people?

**A.** We are very anxious to take in respectable people if they come forward and join us.



Q. I think something must be done by the proprietors of the studios in their own interest first because it will improve not only the industry but the profession as well?

A. In what way can they do it? When we want actors and actresses we have to rely upon the class of people we now get because a better class of girls would not come forward.

Q. The proprietors can make the life of the present class of girls more happy in the studio by paying them decently and by making them contented?

A. That we are trying to do.

Q. Do you think the conditions are quite good in the studio?

A. I think the signs are very happy, and there is great progress in every direction.

Q. You think that it will be useful for the industry generally if Government had a well equipped studio of their own with people who can give assistance to studio owners and other producers in the matter of directing, camera work and in various things?

A. Do you mean foreign experts as directors? I should very much like to have a big studio opened by Government with proper equipment. But as far as the technical experts are concerned, I would rather leave that question to be tackled here in India.

Q. Don't you think that you yourself are better for your trip to the west?

A. I would like our people to go to the west learn there and return to this country.

Q. First of all, we must send our people there, then they must come out here with experts.—I don't mean permanently but say for a year or six months, so that they may give the necessary training and guidance? Is that what you mean?

A. I don't think the guidance of foreign experts in directing will be useful.

Q. But I dare say you have learnt a lot in directing and in technique?

A. I would like their assistance in technique, but as regards directing, I think we could do it better here.

Q. I don't mean to say that they can do it single handed but with the aid of Indians who have had experience in the line. I mean if you had a good expert from Germany to assist you, it would be a good thing, would it not?

A. Yes, certainly.

Q. For instance, selecting actors and actresses is not an easy thing?

A. But there is not much selection to do. We have to rely on the material we have.

Mr. Green : Did you try to get a job in England on your way through.

A. Yes.

Q. In what capacity did you try for a job?

A. As an assistant camera man.

Q. Did you inquire if there was any vacancy?

A. I knew there were a few vacancies, but for me there were no vacancies.

Q. If there is a vacancy anywhere, every employer will naturally consider the qualifications of the applicants, will he not? I have often done so myself. If you were not taken on, perhaps there were other applicants who were probably better qualified than yourself?

A. The producer to whom I had taken the letter of introduction could have at least seen me. But he simply sent word by one of his typists telling me that there was no vacancy.

Q. Had you written for an appointment?

A. Yes. The Kodak Co. did everything for me. I wrote previously for an appointment, not only that I even went half an hour earlier.

**Q.** It is a little difficult for a gentleman to judge of his own merits. You say there was jealousy in the studios. Do you mean they were reluctant to impart their trade secrets?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Is it not natural and inevitable?

**A.** Yes, they did not want to give out their secrets because the industry was then in its infancy.

**Q.** Do you know how the western countries impart training to young men in technical workshops? I can give you an example of my own brother who got himself apprenticed to an engineering workshop after paying a very considerable premium, because even before the war they had to pay a very heavy premium before one could get apprenticed. A premium of £300 was not very much then. He had to work as a labourer. He had to get up at day break. He had to attend to all the machines right through the workshops, and for that he was not paid anything. Then after he had done that for three years, he had to find paid employment. No one can go to a trade that has any secrets worth knowing and get that information for nothing.

**A.** I was even prepared to pay a premium if only the producer had seen his way to give me an interview, but he merely sent word to me by his typist saying that he had no time to see me!

**Q.** You know that the film industry in England is not very flourishing?

**A.** I know it.

**Col. Crawford :** You have learnt your trade in America. Have you any idea of the film value of any actor or actress? How do you find this out?

**A.** In this line I have had training as a photographer and I can choose.

**Q.** I understand there is an actual machine which they use in America which gives them the photographic value of a particular type of face.

**A.** Not in my time. I was not shown a machine. But in America generally they have very big artists to select actors and actresses. He is called the casting director.

**Q.** That is for people whose value is already known. But when they are looking for new people?

**A.** I don't know that.

**Q.** Now these institutes that you went to in America, who runs them? Are they public institutions?

**A.** Oh! yes, they are public institutions. Columbia and Illinois are public institutions. They are public and there are definite courses in each university. Now people in every university in America have got a photographic course and a cinematograph course. Formerly Columbia was the only place but now they have opened a regular college. They are going to give degrees and the only qualification that is required is that the student should be a B.Sc. He must know something of science before he can take the training for two years.

**Q.** Well now, after your experience in America, do you consider that the best method of training Indians to become experts in this particular industry is to send them abroad or to give them an opportunity for training in India?

**A.** Well, they should be sent abroad.

**Q.** You think that it is preferable to send them abroad rather than to have experts here to train them?

**A.** Yes, I would rather send them to these universities that have these courses, instead of joining any studios abroad.

**Q.** Supposing, I will only say supposing, the Government were to set up a studio of their own here absolutely up to date with an expert director, an expert camera man and an expert scenario writer, with a view to training Indians here, would you prefer that type of thing to sending your students abroad?

**A.** I would rather send my students abroad. On the whole, I think experience abroad is of greater value.

**Q.** Well now, you say it cost you Rs. 22,000.

*Chairman* : I suppose you lived well?

A. Yes, I lived well.

Q. But on the whole it was rather a big sum for ordinary student. He could do it much cheaper than that.

A. But I went all over Europe just to see the place.

Q. What do you think is the least that he could do it on?

A. Well the student if he goes and joins a university will have to stay there for two years, so his expenses would be about Rs. 200 per mensem.

Q. In America?

A. Yes, he can live on Rs. 200 a month. That is just about 15 pounds. Because he could live in the college residence or the Y.M.C.A.

*Col. Crawford* : I have not been to America but I understand it is most expensive.

A. But the Y.M.C.A. is very good for Indian students.

Q. Now as regards your stories out here, do you take them from Indian literature, or do you make them up entirely yourself?

A. Entirely myself.

Q. You don't produce films of existing stories?

A. No. The plots are originally written for the films.

Q. Do you contemplate adapting stories from popular books and converting them into film pictures?

A. The difficulty is we have not got scenario writers here. Supposing we want to adapt a very popular novel we cannot do it. Because we can't adapt it.

Q. Isn't your scenario writer capable of adapting somebody else's story?

A. No, he may adapt but he cannot adapt wholly. He may take only a few points from the story and impart his own ideas.

Q. What is done in America? In America do they have scenario writers who write original stories or do they only adapt?

A. There are three kinds of screen writers in America. One man only adapts for the screen; he only draws points for the screen. Then that script goes to the scenario writer who writes a scenario on that and then the director again has his continuity which is written by his own experts according to his own ideas. So it passes through four different sets before it reaches the director.

Q. I would very much like to see a copy of a scenario. Yours is an English one? One that you have done—you might send me a copy.

A. We will.

Q. Well now, regarding the production of stories suitable for your Indian market, have you found it necessary to adopt American methods regarding the making of these pictures sensational?

A. Not particularly. But in social pictures we have got some stunts just to attract and keep the liveliness in the picture all the time.

Q. Americans apparently, in order to make their pictures popular make them entirely sensational. And I wonder if it is a fact that you too have to make your stories sensational.

A. Well, I should not call them sensational. But they do like to see certain stunts in the story.

Q. Well, what Americans call giving pictures a certain amount of pep. Have you found your audience requiring pep and is the type you have got to give the American type of pep or your own type?

A. We have our own type.

*Mr. Coatsman* : Just to carry on what Col. Crawford was asking, do you find that Indian audiences prefer Indian films which deal with Indian stories in purely an Indian way or do they prefer Indian stories with western amendments or western touches?

A. They prefer Indian stories, purely Indian stories and purely Indian treatment.

**Q.** Is there any tendency to demand western touches in the stories?

**A.** In social pictures there is some tendency, on the part of the educated classes, to have some western touches in the films. But as far as the illiterate masses are concerned, they would rather see purely Indian pictures.

**Q.** Then there is a noticeable difference between the preferences of the illiterates and the educated people?

**A.** Yes, there is.

**Q.** The educated people tend to prefer western touches.

**A.** Especially in social dramas.

**Q.** Well now, would your educated Indian audiences prefer to see a love scene on the film between two Indian characters in an Indian story treated in the western method?

**A.** No, they would not.

**Q.** Not even the educated?

**A.** No, because our conventions are different.

**Q.** You notice no tendency to get towards these conventions even on the part of the educated?

**A.** No.

**Q.** Then do you believe that Indian subjects should be treated in the Indian way with the Indian conventions?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You regard it as undesirable that the western touches should be introduced?

**A.** Yes. I am for giving purely Indian pictures. I want to create a taste among Indians to like Indian subjects.

**Q.** Now in your productions, have you produced always Indian themes or have you introduced western plots into Indian settings?

**A.** No, never western plots. Always purely Indian plots.

**Q.** And you have treated them purely in the Indian fashion?

**A.** Yes, and they are popular.

**Q.** There is a demand for these pictures?

**A.** There is.

**Q.** Now do you think that scenes from shall we say the mythology or the fairy stories of other nations would be popular in India?

**A.** Yes, they are popular.

**Q.** In your opinion does the illiterate Indian understand anything of what he sees on the screen in a western picture?

**A.** No, I doubt very much. An illiterate audience would rather prefer a mythological picture because Indian mythology they understand and they can follow the picture to the end.

**Q.** Then as far as the illiterates are concerned, they would feel no loss at all if they never see a western film?

**A.** No.

**Q.** What about the educated audience?

**A.** Well, by and by I am sure the educated masses will also never feel the want of western pictures. If they could only get good Indian pictures, with social or historical backing.

**Q.** Well, the question I am now going to ask is a matter of pure hypothesis but it is interesting and it may be useful to know your views. If you could produce in this country Indian pictures treated in the purely Indian way with the same technique, the same standard of plot, and acting, lighting effects, and props as the best American films, do you think the educated Indian would prefer that to a film produced in America?

**A.** By all means. He would prefer that picture to any American picture.

*Mr. Neogy* : I don't know whether I understood you correctly. I want to know whether it is your view that so far as the director and the scenario writer are concerned, they must understand Indian ways. It is no use bringing them out from abroad. Is that your view?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* And India must therefore evolve her own directors and scenario writers. They must be able to enter into the spirit of everything Indian in order to succeed as directors and scenario writers in India.

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* And for that purpose you would be prepared to recommend their training abroad rather than getting experts from foreign countries.

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* So it is in regard only to camera men that you are prepared to have any expert brought out from abroad?

*A.* Yes, on matters of technique, because there are several electricians and all that, because in India we have not got that.

*Q.* Now, I want you to tell me the various experts which you think might be brought out from abroad? Camera men, electricians. What else?

*A.* Well these two will do, because we are bound to have electrical studios within a few years and their assistance will be of great help to us. But here I don't mean to say that we have not got camera men. But they have advanced a great deal in America and so I would rather have their assistance here.

*Q.* Supposing you had a camera man brought out on short term contract, for what period would you like that man to be employed in India for the purpose of giving Indians a training?

*A.* But I don't suppose it will be possible for him to give any training with what materials he would get here. Because this camera training is not so easy that it can be given in a few months. So for giving training in India, if an expert were to be called here, I do not suppose we shall gain much.

*Q.* Then what is your view?

*A.* My view is we should rather go there and study.

*Q.* Even for the training of camera men?

*A.* If they want to give general assistance when we are producing then they are quite welcome.

*Q.* What do you mean?

*A.* Supposing I start my new studio with electric lights, that will be a new thing here. I would rather have an electrician coming over here just to set up the new plant. That is all.

*Q.* You won't require his assistance in the working of the plant later?

*A.* No. Supposing I wanted to start a big laboratory, I would rather bring a camera man who would have seen lots of big laboratories in America and Europe and give his own ideas and assist in a general way and go back.

*Q.* I see. Supposing you were to have camera men of this sort and electricians for this purpose what salary do you think would attract a man whose services would be worth having?

*A.* Well, I don't suppose he would come for anything under 4 or 5 thousand rupees a month.

*Q.* And you would bring them out only for the purpose of fitting out the laboratories; nothing more?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Electricians to fit up the studios and then you will send them away. Is that the position?

*A.* Yes. Because they have introduced certain scientific methods even in the laboratories of which we do not know. So, if they would come and only assist in that particular way, it would be rather useful.

**Q.** But if, as you say, you don't know certain methods which have been introduced in America, won't you require your men to be trained in these methods under the direction of these people?

**A.** Well, not trained. They could only show the methods. They could only tell the methods.

**Q.** By whatever name you may call it, isn't that training people? How long do you think a man would require to get that necessary training?

**A.** Well, in order to get a perfect knowledge of laboratory work and electrical work I dare say two years.

**Q.** Now, supposing we were to send out our own men also for training abroad, which country do you think would be the best suited for this purpose?

**A.** America.

**Q.** Have you ever been to Germany? Had you any opportunity to study the position there?

**A.** At that time Germany was not doing much.

**Q.** When was this?

**A.** I was there in the year 1922. So I spoke of that period. At that time they had just begun to produce pictures.

**Q.** But you must be aware that Germany has advanced a great deal?

**A.** Oh! yes, during my absence. Now they have advanced a great deal. In fact their technique is much better than that of the American. But why I want students to go to America is that there are these university courses and a student will have no difficulty at all in getting the knowledge which he wants, provided he pays for it.

**Q.** But isn't it a fact that in these matters a practical training in a studio would be of more value than a university course?

**A.** Oh! yes, but the university course is given in a practical way also. They have got their laboratories, their own studios, their own scenario writers and as a matter of fact the Columbia University is going to produce some pictures at the same time giving education to the students.

**Q.** Have you any information as to the length of the course?

**A.** Two years. The only thing is that the student must be a B.Sc. or he must have some degree in science before he can take that course. It was started by Professor Murray who started the general school in America.

**Q.** Well, I suppose you entertain the ambition of so improving Indian pictures as to find a market for them in the foreign countries. Do you think, provided you improve the technique, foreign countries will afford a good market for Indian pictures at any time?

**A.** Well, I have hopes. Provided we spend money on a picture; provided we give a good length of time to produce that picture, I don't see any reason why our pictures shouldn't find a market in America.

**Q.** Have you ever tried any of your productions just to find out whether there is any possibility of any foreign market?

**A.** No, we have not. Although our pictures are going to Africa to-day.

**Q.** Oh! that is for the benefit of the Indians there. That is what we were told this morning.

**A.** Yes. I would very much like our pictures to go to America and draw, so that the people on the other side of the shore would understand what India is.

**Q.** What kind of subjects do you think would appeal to the foreign market?

**A.** Historical subjects. And subjects like the Ramayana will also be popular.

**Q.** Are they at all anxious to know these things?

**A.** Yes, they are. These were my personal observations in America. People in fact are trying Mr. Lubitch one of the best producers in America is as a matter of fact going to produce a picture about the life of Gautama Buddha in

Germany. He has come down to Germany and he intends to start on that new production.

**Q.** An American coming down to Germany to produce an Indian picture—the life of Buddha?

**A.** Mr. Lubitch, who is a German who was living in America he has now gone back to Germany since he has come to the conclusion that the Germans are far superior to the Americans. So he went back to Germany as he is sure to get good technique in Germany.

**Q.** Do you think any other country might also prove a profitable market for the Indian pictures?

**A.** Yes, a place like England also.

**Q.** What about other places?

**A.** Germany also.

**Q.** Now, how much do you think you would require to improve your studio just to bring it up to your idea of things?

**A.** A capital of 5 lakhs would be required.

**Q.** Including the working capital or merely the capital cost of the studio?

**A.** Including the working capital.

**Mr. Coatman :** And the cost of land?

**A.** No. Land we can get on lease here.

**Mr. Neogy :** And how many pictures, say, of the average size could you expect to produce on this amount?

**A.** About 20 pictures a year.

**Q.** Now, about this government studio, what use do you think you can make of a government studio supposing one is established?

**A.** Well, we can use the electric lights.

**Q.** Supposing it is situated at Delhi or some other place to be used by people from all over the country : how do you think you will benefit by the establishment of such an institute?

**A.** I am for provincial studios. One in Bombay, one in Calcutta and one in Madras.

**Q.** That is to say, wherever there is a producing company there ought to be a studio. Otherwise it would be no use.

**A.** These government studios would be very useful for small producers who could go and produce one good picture on a reasonable capital. Now, if I want to produce a picture, I cannot do it because I have to spend lots of money on the building of the studio, which amount I could very easily put into the production.

**Q.** Your idea is that in the production of a particular picture you will have to engage your own actors and actresses, provide your own settings and scenes, take the people and the setting to the studio and there produce your own pictures. And for that purpose a studio must be near at hand, otherwise it will be of no use?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** How many concerns do you think would be able to take advantage of the studio at the same time simultaneously?

**A.** It all depends upon the size of the studio. But a fairly large studio could easily accommodate four companies.

**Q.** We were told that there is some necessity for observing secrecy in the matter of production of a film. Supposing you were producing a particular film in one part of the studio, do you think a rival producer would be in your way in another part of the studio at the same time?

**A.** Well, I don't think so.

**Q.** You don't think there is any great necessity for observing secrecy in producing films?

**A.** No, not at all.

**Chairman :** Thank you. Mr. Dwarkadas, we are asking for some information from studio proprietors for our confidential information. You will hear in due course.

**Written Statement by Mr. D. FRENCHMAN, dated 14th November 1927.**

**INTRODUCTORY.**

1. Yes. I worked under the Bombay Board of Film Censors for three years. My connection and knowledge of this industry and trade is confined to India. My connection and knowledge of this industry and trade is confined to India alone.

**GENERAL.**

2. (a) The Indian, generally speaking, has not taken to Cinemas as the American has done. The percentage of highly cultured (by culture I do not mean of refined tastes only, but men of learning), who attend the pictures is negligible. Amongst the educated classes the Cinema-going public is fairly good, but these classes amuse itself with foreign rather than Indian pictures. The illiterate makes up the mass of cinema-goers.

(b) The nature and class of audience depends largely on the location and the standard of films shown in the Picture Houses. Picture Houses, situated in European quarters of a town, attract refined and educated classes of peoples. Those situated in Indian quarters, displaying Indian films or American Serials, attract mostly the illiterate classes. Religious and Historical films of Indian interest draw a large number of Indian women. In a Picture House, usually, the higher classes of seats are taken up by the literate audience and the lower classes are filled with the illiterate.

(c) 10 per cent. to 15 per cent.

**PART I.**

3. With the educated and literate class of audience high class dramas and historical pictures are popular, but with the illiterate and uneducated sensational dramas (stories of the Wild West, etc.), serials and Indian pictures are popular. In the mofussil the latter kind of pictures run well.

4. Nearly all cinemas, except in Presidency towns and Cantonments, cater for Indian audiences. The pictures shown in such theatres cannot be said "adequately catering." The exhibitor generally hits upon sensational dramas and serials and by display of sensational posters and advertisements draws and retains an audience which is more or less sentimental in nature. Very clean pictures can be made popular if the exhibitors persisted in showing nothing but films of a higher standard. An acquired taste for the sensational has become a second habit amongst the cinema-goers and they refuse, now, to be entertained by really healthy films. The American pictures which deal with society in the Yankee way, has taken a hold on the market. In Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, and Lahore where the educated and literate people go to pictures, high class dramas and fine subjects depicted on the screen are popular, but in small centres, the exhibitors has to make his living on the illiterate and he invariably goes in for serials of a highly sensational type and Indian pictures. It will not pay him to introduce better pictures, for the finer the picture it becomes harder for the class of people who go to see it to follow the meaning of that picture. The question whether the exhibitors are adequately catering for Indian audiences cannot be denied. The exhibitor has created a taste amongst his audience for a type of film which he can conveniently and cheaply get and he keeps to it. The Indian audience is not a very discriminating audience. Its imagination is caught and carried away by stunts and fights wherein the hero is usually the superman. In some of the theatres, when clean and healthy films, depicting the higher standard of Western Life and stories translated from Novels and Romances of reputation have been



shown, the educated class always responds generously and the exhibitors do very good business. The exhibitor would surely standardize his theatre with such subjects, but the difficulty of procuring and the price of such films do not usually compensate the trouble. Subjects, like the Fall of Troy, Napoleon, The Last Days of Pompeii, The Tale of Two Cities, Quo Vadis, If Winter Comes, The Back House, Notre-Dame de Paris, The Count of Monte Cristo, Les Misérables, The Thief of Bagdad, The Three Musketeers, Oliver Twist, Beau Geste, have had phenomenal success.

5. Yes.

(a) With very few exceptions they are not of a good quality.

(b) With the illiterate classes only.

(c) Lanka Dahan, Krishna Janma, Ratnavali, Sardarba, Sinhagad, Sacrifice, Sati Annsuiya, Murliwala, Netaji Indra Sabha, and a host of films dealing with stories of Indian Mythology which have had great financial success.

6. (a) Yes.

(b) Yes.

1. Unless the standard of films is raised Indian films can never be popular with the educated classes.

2. Except topical of all kinds.

3. Nil.

8. No.

(b) Lack of capital is the main difficulty. Those who are in the trade of picture productions are groaning under debts. The industry requires a capital of at least Rs. 10 lacs to put it on firm basis. Those who are in the trade are men deficient in true culture, education and art. Their entire energy is focussed on making money. The majority have no conception of Art, Beauty or Truth. They devote no attention to the time or place of incident. I will cite only one instance, characters in Mythological films move before us in the most modern style. Prehistorical age is painted in modern colours and styles. The producer experiences no hesitation in shooting 30 scenes on the same flats. He sadly lacks all the finer instincts of Fine Art. The choice of actors or actresses for their respective characters is very poor and limited. Anybody would do so as long as a film can be placed on the quickest market. The class of men and women who are engaged as artists are mostly illiterate people and belong to a very low status in life. Female characters are usually drawn from the prostitute and dancing girl classes. When such is the status of the artists, it is very hard to find any man or woman of educational and moral reputation to join a film concern. The moral tone prevailing in these companies is vulgar. One of the causes of the failure of this industry is that the promoters and owners of several or such concerns lost their heads and hearts after their artists. The industry has a bright future if capital is forthcoming. If men of the right type took up this trade and avoid moral degradation, this industry is bound to succeed. Want of capital leads a promoter to seek for artists from amongst the dregs of society with the result which is patent. To keep the ball rolling he has to throw into the market films at the greatest speed and this leads him to pay the least attention to higher and finer technique. It is a pity that this industry has not yet attracted the right kind of men with right capital. It is my opinion that to give the film industry its proper place a Company should be floated in co-operation with an English film concern and the management of such a concern should be left in the hands of a mixed Directorate of Indians and Englishmen with a Britisher at the head of the routine and running of the industry. The Indian promoters lack sadly the powers of organisation and discipline.

(9) No.

(a) No. Competition with foreign films hits hard the Indian producer.

(b) No.

10. No, but to a certain extent Bombay has a great influence on the successful theatres. A picture that has a three weeks' run in Bombay is

bound to do very good business outside it. Some of the film producers who own theatres in Bombay run their pictures, however, poor, for two weeks here in their houses to get a better demand for it from the up-country houses.

11. No.

(a) Not under the present circumstances.

12. To a great extent this tax has effected the takings of the box office. Indians who go to pictures usually take their families with them and as they have to pay higher taxes for higher classes they go into lower classes.

13. Tariff on raw films must be reduced to allow the Indian producer to compete with the American films.

14. Yes. A taste for educational films must be inculcated in schools. If once it is done a healthy moral tone for films will be acquired and when the school boy grows up he will refuse to see pictures that are so common in the market now-a-days.

(a) No.

15. Yes.

(a) The climatic conditions together with the natural conditions which suit the production of pictures gives India a unique opportunity for the production of pictures. The growing taste for the cinemas cannot be satisfied by the present state of the industry. The Indian audience has a partiality for Indian pictures in preference to Western films but the demand cannot be satisfied at present for it is more than the supply.

16. No. With the exception of a very few, the majority have no training in the technique of Photo-Play. There is, so far as I know, and from films I have seen, no man in India with original ideas. The producer usually looks to his returns. He has not the finer senses to look into the Fine Arts and technique of the pictures. The directors, with the exception of a few who have some experience of the Western Studios, are an indigenous product and are satisfied with the theatrical antics of the artists. The Indian director woefully lacks the instincts of originality and higher acting. The actor or actress is usually recruited from the streets and a show of hands and twitching of the face is the maximum effort they can put as actors. Their deficiency of literature makes them helplessly ignorant of the importance of the parts they rarely shows any emotion in the most serious part he acts. Scenario writers of sufficient technical knowledge there are none. They are mere copyists. Very few original stories are thrown into the market.

(b) A few educated men should be sent to the Western countries for a course of training and on their return they should be placed in charge of their departments with a full and free hand in management. By paying well the right sort of people should be attracted. Good salaries would draw the proper class. The refuse of society which at present flocks in should be combed out.

17. Under the present circumstances No. The Indian capitalist looks down upon this trade. Indian society has a standard of morality with which the morality of a studio can never agree. Indian society has an abhorrence for prostitutes, which provides the largest number of Indian actresses. Sufficient capital can come forth if men with a broader outlook and strict morals entered into the trade. To persuade capital would be difficult at present.

18. I am not in favour of any such action.

19. Very favourably.

20. (a) I have no proposals and I am opposed to all proposals.

(b) No.

21. State monopoly is not desirable. Such a monopoly will crush all private enterprise. The State has more vital questions to attend to than the film industry.

22. Every time British films must be given an encouragement.

(a) Surely.

(b) Certainly.

(c) Of course. The American films with their morbid psychology are dangerous. Hollywood and Los Angeles have created in the mind of the illiterate Indian altogether wrong impression of the Western civilisation.

(d) To compete with American pictures, British films should have no custom Tariff. One of the causes why British pictures are not so widely exhibited is that they are expensive in comparison with the American pictures. To enable the British film to compete they must be exempted from Customs Duty. It should be made compulsory on every showman to exhibit a certain footage of British pictures. I feel confident that the higher tone of British pictures will slowly revolutionise the taste of the Indian audience and they will insist on British pictures. America captured the market taking advantage of the War and has retained the hold by sensationalism. All British films must have captions and titles in the Provincial vernaculars when they are to be exhibited in India. I am certain that if such titles are made the British films will be a success.

23. (a) The Cinema pictures are the best medium of conveying to different members of the British Empire the conditions, etc., of the various Governments. The illiterate and even the educated who take no interest in newspapers, can be acquainted with the various Governments of the Commonwealth.

(b) There should be a Central Agency in each Government who should publish a sort of a Cinema Weekly Gazette on the lines of the Pathe Gazette and the Topical News. This department should be joined in India to the Information Bureau. The Bureau should invite from producers and others pictures of Indian interests and pay them a fixed amount per foot. There are quite a number of amateurs who would be only too glad to send their pictures of topical interest if such an Agency were started. It should be made compulsory on all cinemas to show one such Topical Gazette every week received from various Governments and correspondingly other Governments must show the Indian Topical.

## PART II.

24. (a) Some of the American pictures have. Some of the film-stunts are, or have been, put into practice at the cost of the innocent citizen.

(b) No.

(c) Some of the serials in which there is a tug-of-war between the hero and the crooks, show the ignorant public quite a number of tricks the crook has at his command and which he is tempted to put into actual practice, to realize at his cost that picture and actuality are two different entities. Films depicting scenes of Night Clubs and Bacchanalian scenes have a low moral effect. The American pictures give an altogether poor impression of the Western culture to the illiterate audience. The ignorant man believes that the West is full of love-making, divorce, murder and thieving.

(d) To the unlettered and the young.

It creates an altogether wrong impression of Western life. The psychological effect is very poor. The uneducated and untrained mind carries away false impressions after seeing a picture in which theft, larceny, murder and arson are the main factors. Films in which communism plays a part has a disastrous effect at the present time and incites hatred between classes. The effect of such films may not be apparent immediately but constantly looking at such pictures, debases the mind undoubtedly.

(e) The Censorship is quite adequate in either cases.

(f) Not appreciably. There may be a few stray instances.

25. Yes.

26. (a) Yes.

(b) Life of Buddha, Vir Durgadas and Shah Jehan. I was against this picture, but the Indian members of the Board overruled me. I do not think

there is any true and solid reason for objecting to these pictures, it is mere sentimentalism.

27. (a) Quite a number.

(b) Yes, Restrict all such pictures. There are a few American serials in which Indians are always crooks and represented as cruel and cunning.

28. (a) (b) Films picturing passionate love scenes and criminal mentality have a low and a depressing effect.

29. No.

30. No.

31. Yes.

32. The present system is as good as it can be.

33. (a) Certainly, but a little strictness would be in the interest of the country.

(b) Of course.

(c) No.

34. (a) I would not urge a Central Board except as an Umpire. A few instances where Boards have disagreed should not be made a ground for the establishment of a Central Board in lieu of the present Provincial Boards.

(1) No.

(2-4) I would like to see a Central Board established in Delhi to act as an Umpire in all disputes.

(b) This Board should be composed of members from various Provinces of India.

(c) It is to decide all disputes arising over Provincial disagreements.

(d) A fee for re-examination should be levied whenever a film is referred to the Central Board.

35. There is some improvement desirable.

(b) The present system in Bombay is quite satisfactory.

36. (a) Yes.

(b) No.

37. (a) & (b) Yes.

38. Yes. "Broken Blossom", "Orphans of the Storm".

39, 42. No.

43. (a) Yes.

(b) To prevent undesirable films from entering the country and preventing the export of such pictures.

In spite of all vigilance there are quite a number of immoral pictures in the country.

(c) All films must be examined by the Board before the Customs hands it over to the Importer. There is no difficulty when dealing with films of reputation like the Universal Pictures Corporation, Madan Theatres, Pathe, but some petty dealers now and then give the authorities the slip.

44. By non-co-operation.

45. (a) Yes. At present the industry is in its infancy in India but sooner or later it will grow up into a huge body and it is much better that the Government control should be exercised from the very beginning. There is every likelihood of the repetition of scenes of American studios, of rank vice and immorality.

Rules of Sanitation should be enforced.

Working hours must be restricted.

Children under 12 must not be employed or, if employed, must be segregated from the adults.

45. (b) Yes.

**Oral Evidence of Mr. D. FRENCHMAN, Ex-Inspector of the Bombay Board of Film Censors and Film producer, on Friday, the 15th November 1927.**

**Chairman :** You have given us a full statement. You were of course connected with Censorship, and it is on that aspect that I wish to put you some questions. Do you consider that the present system by which only one gentleman, an Inspector, passes the bulk of the films is satisfactory?

**A.** I think so. It is quite satisfactory.

**Q.** I daresay you have heard complaints that the censorship in certain classes of films is lax, that the censor allows films and scenes which have a demoralising effect on the public?

**A.** Yes, I have heard it.

**Q.** How do you justify your view that the present method of censorship is satisfactory?

**A.** If you want to be very strict, then you will have to reject all films, you will have to stop them altogether; if you make the censorship too strict, the cinemas will never be patronised by the public in the way they are patronised now.

**Q.** You think the tightening up of the censorship will have an injurious effect on the trade?

**A.** Yes, surely.

**Q.** Don't you think it will be an improvement if two Members of the Board were to see a film?

**A.** I have no objection if there are really cultured Members on the Board.

**Q.** If you make a good choice and have a large panel from which two members will be chosen, it will be better than the present method?

**A.** It will be very difficult for the Board to get members like that. I don't think it would be feasible.

**Q.** Will it be possible?

**A.** I don't think men of real integrity would be able to spare the time.

**Q.** Or supposing you had two or three full time paid members, and at least two of them saw each film, would it not be better?

**A.** It would not be a financial success unless you taxed the industry heavily.

**Q.** When did you cease to be a member of the Censorship Board?

**A.** In 1925.

**Q.** I suppose you have heard some complaint that Indian films are treated differently from the foreign films?

**A.** I don't think so. On the contrary, Indian films are treated more generously than foreign films.

**Q.** You don't think the cinema has any evil influence on the public?

**A.** Some American pictures have.

**Q.** What is the essential difference?

**A.** Illiterate people who see the western pictures do not understand the western life.

**Q.** But you say that the illiterate people prefer to see western pictures?

**A.** If you start in competition to show Indian pictures, the American film will beat the Indian. If you will go to the northern part of the town where there are theatres showing American serials, you will always find that those theatres are crowded. The Globe Cinema and the Royal Theatre always show American serials. The American cinema near the Parsi Statue also shows American serials always.

**Q.** Do you keep in mind when you are censoring a film where it came from?

**A.** It does not make any difference.

Q. Do you find out, or do you care to inquire where a certain film has come from before it is censored?

A. Every film has the country of its production marked on it.

Q. Do you care to know whether it came from Britain or America or Germany?

A. Yes.

Q. Why do you that?

A. We have to report upon the country of its production.

Q. I mean in the process of censoring does that factor enter your head?

A. Yes, Sir, it does enter our head.

Q. How does it enter your head? How does it count as a factor in censorship?

A. We have to make a report as to the place where the film was produced.

Q. In the process of censoring does that factor count?

A. No, it does not count in the process of censoring.

Q. I mean human nature being what it is, we have to guard against particular partiality for any particular country in the process of censoring?

A. I don't think we have done so, so far.

Q. That is an element to be guarded against, is it not? One man may have a bias for a particular country. I don't say it is blameworthy, probably it may be a natural desire to favour one's own country in that way. But I think it will be a good thing to have more than one person to examine each film, will it not?

A. I think so.

Q. I suppose you have censored both English and American films. We asked for figures the other day as to the quantity of the films censored. I don't think we have got them yet. Have you had occasion to censor more American films than British films?

A. Of the total amount censored, I believe only 10 per cent. were British.

Q. Does the British film show a better standard than the American film for the purposes of censoring? Can you give us figures for that?

A. All the British pictures I have so far seen are far cleaner than the American pictures.

Q. I should like to be satisfied about it by figures. Do you make any yearly reports to your Board?

A. No.

Q. In your official capacity have you had any occasion to draw attention to this preponderance?

A. I think so.

Q. When was that?

A. Some time in 1924.

Q. Do you think the Indian films are becoming popular?

A. Yes.

Q. And you think they have a good future?

A. Yes, provided there is a combing out of the present state of the industry. If the industry exists as it does to-day, it will never be a success.

Q. It requires a certain amount of helping hand, is it not?

A. I don't think so, but people must rise to the occasion.

Q. But does the industry need any other help?

A. I think a little stricter supervision over the studios is necessary.

Q. By the police?

A. I would rather like it. I would put it under the police.

Q. Do you think it will have a good effect?

A. Yes.

Q. Will it not retard the industry?

A. No.

Q. Don't you think the producers will be subjected to petty annoyance and so on?

A. No, sir, it won't cause any annoyance; on the other hand, it will have a check.

Q. Check is annoyance. You don't want to be checked in your movements?

A. I would rather wish to be checked if I go out of my way. If I am straight in my business there will not be any necessity for a check.

Q. You think the adoption of your proposal will not do any harm to the industry?

A. No.

Q. You think there will be difficulty in finding a number of men for censorship, although you think it is more desirable to have each film examined by at least two members.

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Will you be satisfied with the class of people who are now Honorary Magistrates to do the censorship work?

A. I think the qualification required for censorship is a good education I know of certain members who have never been able to follow pictures and such members are on the Board.

Q. You mean that you want university men on the Board?

A. Men with really good qualifications.

Q. Take for instance High Court pleaders? They have good qualifications?

A. Not all of them. I would rather like men of the education department.

Q. And honorary workers and social workers and members of the Vigilance Association?

A. I think such people will be hampering the process of censorship if we employ them.

Q. You want the University to send their representatives.

A. I would rather like it.

Q. And the Corporation also?

A. No.

Q. The Indian Merchants' Chamber?

A. No, because I think they will be unnecessarily interfering with our work.

Q. So if anybody has to be selected, you must first of all choose one from the University. Is there any other body whom you can approach to find out a member.

A. I can't think of anybody else who can give that open and unbiassed mind to the question.

Q. What are you doing now, Mr. Frenchman?

A. I am now on a tea plantation in South India, I am in Travancore.

Q. You think that stricter censorship is needed?

A. My whole idea is to eliminate the American pictures as far as possible if it can be conveniently done.

Q. Although they are supposed to be the best?

A. We have now acquired a taste for the sensational films. It is an acquired taste in us, and we always like to see only such sensational films.

Q. You mean the American pictures as a whole?

A. I mean the majority of them.

Q. Who will take their place if we eliminate them?

A. I would rather prefer British pictures. Every time I have a preference for them.

**Q.** But you know that they do not produce pictures themselves. The industry has not advanced to such a great extent as in America?

**A.** There were several companies in Great Britain.

**Q.** You know in Great Britain itself what percentage of American films are produced?

**A.** It is nearly 80 per cent.

**Q.** I think it is much more.

**A.** America had the opportunity of capturing the market and she has retained it.

**Q.** Is it on political grounds that you say you prefer British films?

**A.** I would rather say on social grounds.

**Q.** Your position is that you would rather close the cinemas than have the American pictures?

**A.** I will carry on with American pictures.

**Q.** What is India's first duty, is it out to develop her own industries or to look out for other films to come in?

**A.** We are unable to develop the industry. We cannot do it under the present circumstances.

**Q.** When are you going to do it?

**A.** When we get the right sort of men.

**Q.** When will you get them? Would you wait till America is captured by others, because by the time the rubbish is thrown out others will have become established in their place?

**A.** We will have to make endeavours . . .

**Q.** To which will you attach greater importance, to open the door to British pictures or to enlarge the Indian industry?

**A.** In the present circumstances, I would open the door to British industries.

**Q.** Do you think your view is shared by the Indian public?

**A.** No.

**Mr. Neogy :** You are very anxious to exclude American pictures. Now, what is the exact way by which you would bring that about as a business man?

**A.** At present, as a business man I would go on with the American pictures until I get Italian or some other pictures.

**Q.** You would depend upon censorship to see that American pictures are excluded?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You won't take any executive action?

**A.** I would take executive action by showing pictures other than American pictures. If once we begin to show pictures of a certain standard people will acquire a taste for them.

**Q.** Who is to do it?

**A.** The showmen.

**Q.** How do you propose to compel showmen to do it?

**A.** They must do it. If they fail to do so. They will be failing in their national duty to the country.

**Q.** They have been deriving a decent income from the American pictures?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Do you not think that if showmen begin to show pictures which have not got those sensational characteristics about them, there will be a dropping off of the audience? And you expect that a large section of the showmen ought to stand that loss?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And you put that proposition forward as a business man?

**A.** I would in the interests of my country.



**Q.** In the interests of your country, you are not prepared to allow Indian pictures to take the place of the American pictures and you would rather have British pictures in place of the Indian?

**A.** I would rather have Indian pictures but we cannot produce them in sufficient quantity.

**Q.** Your idea is to exclude America, allow British pictures to take the place of the American pictures, and then expect the Indian pictures, if they can to survive the competition with British pictures. Is that your scheme?

**A.** Not to compete with British pictures.

**Q.** The British pictures, I take it, will have taken the place of the American pictures when your ideal is achieved. And when the American pictures are driven out, how do you expect to encourage the Indian picture industry after that? Will you depend upon competition pure and simple or would you allow any preferential treatment to the Indian pictures in competition with foreign pictures?

**A.** I will have preferential treatment for Indian pictures.

**Q.** What sort of preference?

**A.** Relieve them of tariff duty on importation of raw films, all the appliances for the production of pictures, chemicals and so on.

**Q.** And then expect them to compete with foreign pictures?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** From your experience of the present state of the Indian film industry, do you think that the Indian pictures can in those circumstances be expected to stand competition?

**A.** Provided we get better men, provided we are able to attract men of the right kind of education.

**Q.** How do you propose to attract men of education?

**A.** By giving them good salaries. By attracting capital.

**Q.** How do you propose to attract capital unless there is an assured market for the productions?

**A.** At present there is no market.

**Q.** Will the market be more assured under your scheme?

**A.** We must first drive out the foreign competitor. In the meantime we must try and put our house in order to be able to compete with foreign productions.

**Q.** That means capital?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Capital, you say, is not forthcoming unless the future of the industry is assured?

**A.** It will automatically come if we once start throwing into the market the best pictures and show to the people the possibilities of the industry.

**Colonel Crawford:** In your reply to the Chairman you said that you were inclined to think that the present standard of films on the whole had a demoralising effect. So on the whole, you are prepared to have an injurious effect on society rather than on the trade?

**A.** I would not have any injurious effect on society. I would rather have it on the trade. I really think that the present standard of films have a tendency to produce a demoralising effect.

**Q.** With regard to foreign films, surely the only point about a film is not its country of origin, but its merit?

**A.** I look at the general effect of the picture on the minds of the spectators.

**Q.** I mean the cinema industry will not flourish if the audiences will not attend, and therefore for a picture to be successful, it must depend upon its merit and not on its country of origin?

**A.** Yes.

Q. And it is up to a country, if they want to get their pictures across to any other country, to ensure that their merit is such as to make the film a paying proposition?

A. Yes, it is so.

Q. Is there anything in the nature of a monopoly of American pictures in India to-day?

A. There is a monopoly at present.

Q. On what ground? Simply because other countries are not producing films of sufficient merit?

A. Because we have acquired a taste for sensational films, American films have got a monopoly.

Q. What about German films?

A. They are good.

Q. Are there any German films shown in India to-day?

A. Very few.

Q. They have the merit?

A. Yes, but they cannot compete with American films.

Q. Why?

A. German productions are much more expensive than American films.

Q. From your experience on the Censorship Board, do you think there is any effort on the part of the trade to tamper with the Inspectors?

A. No, none.

Mr. Green: I was not clear about your distinction when censoring the British and American pictures. Did the Board give you any instruction or indication that your standard of censorship should vary according to the country from which a film came?

A. Never.

Q. You never had any instructions from the Board to that effect? I only wanted to be clear about it?

A. No, none whatever.

Q. You do object to American films on social grounds?

A. Yes.

Q. What do you mean by that? Do you object to their moral tone?

A. Yes.



## KARACHI.

**Written Statement of Mr. F. E. CUMMING, City Deputy Collector,  
Karachi, dated the 10th November 1927.**

### INTRODUCTORY.

1. No.

### GENERAL.

2. (a) (1) Very few.

(2) Majority.—Can't say.

(b) Middle and Labouring classes.

(c) None unless taken by relations to matinees.

### PART I.

#### *Film Industry in India.*

3. American Comedies and Serials

4. Yes.

5. I have never seen one.

6—10. Can't say.

11—12 No.

13. The distributors here suggest that some concession might be made and different rates of duty charged on new and second hand pictures respectively.

14. For schools, adults take no interest. No.

15. So I am given to understand.

16. Can't say.

17. Not at present in Karachi.

18. None.

19. I don't know.

20. No.

21. No remarks.

#### *Films of the British Commonwealth.*

22. Certainly.

(a) Might.

(b) Possible.

### PART II.

#### *Social Aspects and Control*

24. (a) Not now.

(b) No.

(c) (1) and (2) I have never seen any.

(e) No.

25. Certainly.

26. (a) Yes.

(b) Have heard of one instance, i.e., the "Veer Durgadas" which was stopped on the second day.

27. (a) I haven't sufficient experience to answer this question.

(b) No.

28. (a) and (b) No.

29 Yes.

30. No, if the pictures are not immoral, "sex", or "crime" pictures.

31. Yes.

32. No censor in Karachi, Local film importers have to send films to Bombay for certification. A Censor or Inspector might be appointed to grant temporary certificates which could be sent to Bombay for general certification.

33. I believe so.

34. Can best be answered by importers.

35—36. None in Karachi.

37. (a) and (b) Yes.

38—40. No.

41. I have not noticed anything in any of the films I have seen, to suggest that moral standard should be improved.

42. No.

43. This can best be answered by importers of films.

44. I don't know of any steps that public bodies could take, but so far as the press is concerned omission of all reference to a doubtful film would prevent its coming to the notice of the public.

45. I am not in a position to answer this question.

### **Oral Evidence of Mr. F. E. CUMMING, City Deputy Collector, Karachi, on Monday, the 21st November 1927.**

*Chairman:* Now, Mr. Cumming, you are the City Deputy Collector of Karachi?

A. Yes.

Q. How long have you been in Karachi?

A. Since 1913.

Q. Where do you live here?

A. At present I am stopping at the Central Hotel.

Q. And all along you have been in Karachi?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you go to the cinema much?

A. Occasionally.

Q. How many cinema shows are there in the city?

A. There are 9 in the city altogether.

Q. Are they in the cantonment?

A. No, there are none in the cantonment. They are just outside the cantonment—the Palace is one that is just outside.

Q. It serves the cantonment?

A. Yes, it used to serve the cantonment. There are two or three of them now serving the cantonment—the Palace, the Crown and the Capitol. Those are the three nearest to the cantonment.

Q. And are they owned by different individuals?

A. The Palace and the Star cinemas are run by Madans. The Capitol is owned by another individual. The proprietor of the Capitol owns about 3 or 4.

Q. Which is the cinema you go to when you go at all?

A. Either the Palace or the Capitol.

Q. Both of them are outside the city?

A. Yes, outside Karachi city.

Q. I notice you say you have never seen an Indian film here.

A. I am afraid I have not.

Q. Are they exhibited here at all?

A. Yes, I think the Globe cinema shows some.

Q. No one else? Then all the 9 cinemas run only western films?

A. Yes, I think so.

Q. And of course, your stay in Karachi has been perhaps as long as the cinema has been here?

A. I couldn't tell you.

Q. Of course, there is no film production in this part of the country?

A. There is none.

Q. Where does Mr. Bulchand who is producing some educational and other films produce his films?

A. I could not tell you.

Q. Is there any amusement tax collected here?

A. In the city? Yes.

Q. From the cinemas?

A. Yes.

Q. What is the average collection?

A. Annually about Rs. 40,000.

Q. Altogether?

A. No. Altogether it is just over Rs. 50,000 from all the amusements. But the greater part comes from the cinemas. Say, about Rs. 40,000 roughly.

Q. But what other amusements are there from which you gather this tax?

A. All the theatrical companies, the races, the concerts, the amateur dramatic societies.

Q. And you say the bulk of the tax comes from the cinema?

A. Yes.

Q. And is it a provincial tax here?

A. Yes, it is under the Bombay Government.

Q. Is there any municipal rate besides?

A. No, I don't think so.

Q. I suppose there are the ordinary water and lighting charges?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think the amusement tax operates as a hardship on the trade?

A. I don't think so.

Q. Of course you have the four anna tickets that don't pay any amusement tax?

A. No, they are free.

Q. What are the rates here, do you know?

A. The same as in Bombay, they are under the same Act.

Q. I don't mean the rate of the amusement tax. I mean the rates at the cinema.

A. They go from 4 as., 8 as., Re. 1, Rs. 2, up to Rs. 3, at the bigger cinemas. In the city they go from 2 annas to 8 annas. Of course, the bulk of the cinemas go right up to Rs. 3. The Star, for instance.

Q. Which are the seats which contribute the bulk of your amusement tax?

A. The 8 annas. The Star Cinema do not charge the people the tax: they pay it out of their income. Six of the cinemas do not charge the people the amusement tax: they pay it out of their income.

Q. I see. They did not increase their rates in consequence of the amusement tax, so they pay it out of their income?

A. It does not go on the public.

Q. And they contribute the bulk of the tax?

A. Yes, 6 out of the 9 are like that.

Q. And which are the ones which charge the public?

A. The Palace, the Capitol and the Crown.

Q. Where the people can afford it.

A. Yes.

Q. Are there nightly shows or every evening?

A. Every evening.

Q. In all the 9 cinemas?

A. Two every evening.

Q. Sundays included?

A. I am not sure about the second show, but the Palace I think has only one.

Q. All these 9 theatres run daily?

A. Yes.

Q. And they have got a weekly change of programme?

A. They change twice a week.

Q. Probably in the civil lines?

A. Yes.

Q. But in the city?

A. I could not tell you about the city.

Q. You say the tax does not go on the public at all?

A. Not in those six cinemas.

Q. Do the cinema owners make a good profit here?

A. Well, apparently they do. For instance, one man started with one and he has got four going now.

Q. You think they are doing well?

A. Yes.

Q. But I dare say from your figures you can tell us what each cinema theatre makes?

A. I am afraid I have not got that here, but I could let you have the amount of tax they pay.

Q. Do you differentiate between the various classes who pay it? I suppose you cannot? Can you tell us how much the 8-anna class contributes to the tax?

A. I am afraid not. They pay a lump sum. But I will see if I can let you have figures for each class.

Q. That will give us an idea of their income, won't it?

A. Yes.

Mr. Green: I suppose you cannot tell us how many 2, 3 and 4-anna seats are sold?

A. No, because they pay no tax.

**Chairman:** Now, I see you say in answer to question 13,—about customs and all that—that you are not familiar with the question and that you merely make the statement on the suggestion of some of the distributors?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You are not in charge of customs here?

**A.** No, that is a separate department.

**Q.** I suppose you cannot tell us from your own official experience?

**A.** No, I could not.

**Q.** You simply throw it out on their suggestion. Now, from your experience as a magistrate, do you think educational and propaganda films should be produced?

**A.** I do very little magisterial work. The district magistrate is a separate man. He may know about that.

**Q.** They don't get such films now?

**A.** I have not seen any educational or propaganda films.

**Q.** You think, private enterprise is not likely to spring up in producing films?

**A.** Not in Karachi.

**Q.** Not in this part of the country at all?

**A.** No, I should not think so.

**Q.** Why is that so?

**A.** I don't think they show any enthusiasm for that sort of thing.

**Q.** You mean is it a general lack of initiative and enterprise or is it peculiar to the cinema?

**A.** Probably peculiar to the cinemas only. I don't think anybody has ever tried it.

**Q.** Now, I see that in answer to question 22 you say that India should certainly participate in the Imperial conference. Why do you advocate it?

**A.** Well, these proprietors seem to think it would be a good thing. I have just gone on what they stated.

**Q.** From the statements I have seen, they don't seem to favour it. However, this is not your own view?

**A.** No, it is not my own view.

**Q.** Now, you don't think the cinema has any demoralising effect? I see from your answer to question 24 that you are satisfied generally with the position.

**A.** Yes, so far as I have seen, there is nothing in it really to demoralise anybody.

**Q.** Of course, you are a man with experience of the town. Now, it was suggested in Bombay that different standards of censorship should be applied so far as Sind is concerned as compared with Bombay city.

**A.** We have no separate censor.

**Q.** But do you think a different standard of censorship is needed?

**A.** I don't know what the standard is in Bombay. I would rather not give an opinion.

**Q.** Then I take it you are not familiar with the rules of censorship in Bombay?

**A.** No.

**Q.** At any rate, you have not heard any complaints about the inadequate censorship?

**A.** No.

**Q.** I suppose you come into frequent contact with both the European and Indian population here?

**A.** Yes.



*Q.* I see you suggest that there should be a censor or an inspector who may be appointed to grant temporary certificates. How do you think it will work?

*A.* That was a suggestion made to me by one of the distributors. He told me that any films coming in here have to go to Bombay first and there is all that delay and expense.

*Q.* But in fact, most of the films come through Bombay and you have a board there. However, you don't put it forward as a suggestion made by you

*A.* In order to avoid delay and expense, they told me particularly.

*Q.* But can you get a censorship board here?

*A.* They suggested having just the one inspector to give a sort of temporary certificate while it is shown in Karachi. Then it could go to Bombay and pass the board there.

*Q.* But what is the object of a temporary inspection?

*A.* To be able to show it here before it passes the regular board in Bombay.

*Q.* I don't suppose that the administration would consider that satisfactory?

*A.* No, I dare say it wouldn't, but that was the idea.

*Q.* I see from your answer to 41 that you consider that the moral standard of the pictures shown is such that there is no need for improvement.

*A.* Certainly, those that I have seen.

*Q.* I suppose you have got a fairly vocal press in Karachi?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* And have you seen any complaints in the press about the standard of films shown here?

*A.* Not that I have noticed.

*Q.* I mean it is rather an important factor because the adequacy of the censorship is now in question and that is why I ask you.

*A.* No, I don't think there have been any complaints in the press in Karachi about the films shown.

*Q.* Nor have you heard people complain?

*A.* No.

*Mr. Green:* The Chairman asked you a question as to whether there should be different standards of censorship between Bombay and Sind, and you stated that you were not aware what the standards were.

*A.* No.

*Q.* Well, presumably a good many, if not most, of the films exhibited in Karachi have been passed by the Bombay board?

*A.* I think they have probably all been passed.

*Q.* And I take it from your answers and from what you told the Chairman that you are satisfied with the censorship?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* You don't want any stricter censorship for Karachi city?

*A.* No, I don't think it is necessary.

*Q.* Have you had any experience of other parts of Sind?

*A.* Yes, in times before the cinema was introduced here.

*Q.* But you are satisfied with the Bombay standard as far as Karachi is concerned?

*A.* Yes.

*Col. Crawford:* I gather from what you said that you are not a great frequenter of the cinema?

*A.* I am afraid I am not.

*Q.* How often do you go?

*A.* About twice a month.

**Q.** Your actual official work brings you into considerable contact with the type of audience that attend cinemas? You are the controller of the entertainment tax. So on that question you can speak with authority on the question of attendance at the cinema. Has there been any increase in the attendance at cinemas. Do you think the taste for the cinema is growing?

**A.** Judging by the increase in the numbers at the cinema one would say "yes".

**Q.** And would that be borne out by reference to your entertainment figures?

**A.** It might if we prepare a comparative statement.

**Q.** Could you look into it and see whether that statement could be definitely substantiated,—since the introduction of the tax in 1922—if it is not too great labour.

**A.** I will. The tax came in from January 1923.

**Q.** In answer to the Chairman you were evidently of opinion that the standard of western films as shown has no demoralising effect.

**A.** Certainly, not those that I have seen.

**Q.** Are you yourself satisfied—what is your own personal opinion of the type of story shown?

**A.** I am perfectly satisfied with those that I have seen. I don't know what they show in the city.

**Q.** Taking the western films you are?

**A.** I should think there is nothing wrong with it.

**Mr. Neogy:** You make a suggestion that there might be a local censor who would be empowered to grant temporary certificates.

**A.** I do not make a suggestion. That was a suggestion put forward by the exhibitors.

**Q.** Quite so, but it is in your statement. Is it the idea of those people who make the suggestion that the certificate should hold good only for Karachi city or the province of Sind?

**A.** Only till such time as it goes up to Bombay. And meanwhile it would hold good for Karachi city only.

**Q.** Is there a film importing trade here?

**A.** I couldn't tell you. There is one firm that imports.

**Q.** May I know the name of the firm?

**A.** I cannot think of it now.

**Q.** Have they made any complaint to you regarding the delay which occurs?

**A.** No, it is only in connection with this questionnaire that it came up. They never made any definite complaint.

**Q.** Now, you cite the instance of "Vir Durgadas" which was stopped after having been shown once out here. Was it stopped on the complaint of anybody?

**A.** I believe there was a certain complaint about it.

**Q.** And who stopped it?

**A.** I don't know. The city magistrate, I expect.

**Mr. Coatman:** Who complained to you, do you remember?

**A.** I couldn't tell you.

**Mr. Neogy:** You mentioned that 6 out of the 9 cinema houses here do not attempt to pass on the amusement tax to their customers, whereas 3 do. The three that do add it on to their charges for admission, are they attended mainly by European audiences?

**A.** Yes, Europeans and Anglo-Indians.

**Q.** They form the majority?

A. Yes. I wouldn't say in all. But in the Palace the Europeans do, and in the Capitol the Indians are very strongly represented.

Q. I suppose the films chiefly shown there are imported films?

A. Yes.

Q. Have the proprietors of these 6 theatres ever complained to you?

A. No.

Q. They have never said it was a handicap?

A. No, there has never been anything like that.

**Written Statement of Mrs. A. G. BISSET, President of the Committee of the Young Women's Christian Association, Karachi.**

24. (a) I do.

(b) I do not know.

(c) I think there are three classes of films which are injurious in their effect upon at least portions of the public.

(1) The so called Sex film, surely undesirable from any community's view point.

(2) The film which is criminally suggestive and very harmful for boys and girls and adolescents.

(3) A certain so called "comic" film, being imported at least up to 1923, coarse, suggestive and often offensive and not shown in good houses. As censors the excuse given to us by managers was that they were to be sent to country districts in Burma, and I understood they were not considered good in the United States of America. I have never seen such films exhibited in the home land.

24. (d) My experience as a censor from 1920 to 1923 made me feel that some of the censoring of sex and crime films then being done was inadequate. Some films certified in one province were, to my knowledge, cut and in one case at least prohibited entirely in another province.

25. I do.

26. (a) More care may now be taken, but I know that it was necessary three years ago. Conditions, of course, are now more difficult.

(b) "The Virgin of Stamboul" which offended some Mohammedans in Rangoon, though passed by two censors as being quite acceptable. It was suspended entirely there though the complaints made against it seemed hardly justifiable. I never heard any complaints against it elsewhere in India.

"The Life of Buddha", produced in India, and to a private view of which a large number of representative Burmans were invited. On their request, a certificate for Burma at least was refused.

27. (a) I feel that western civilisation is assuredly misrepresented and lowered.

I cannot say whether it is a fact that films representing western civilisation are generally unintelligible to an uneducated Indian or largely misunderstood by him. I doubt whether this is invariably so.

The source of production seems the place for remedy since such films will continue to be imported, if produced.

27. (b) I do not.

28. Some assuredly have had effects.

Such as mentioned under 24 (c).

29. Certified "for adults only" may be the solution in safeguarding younger people from certain types of films. They are certainly not fit for children or adolescents.

30. I think it would be ideal if Children's Performances could be arranged and if the indiscriminate attendance at cinemas of children up to 14 and 15 years of age prohibited altogether.

Because obviously, most of the programmes are not suitable for children and only stimulate detrimental ideas and tendencies.

31. I consider that censorship is a very effective method of guarding against misuse of the film, in fact indispensable.

32. My only knowledge of censoring work was in Burma from June 1920 to November 1923. Certainly then no other province had a better system, as the Committee was thoroughly representative of all communities and its members did all censoring personally. I cannot now speak for the Burma Committee or that of this Presidency.

33. (a) and (b) A strict censorship would exclude some films now being imported and might be resented by sections of the public.

(c) I cannot see how it would.

34. (a) The personnel of a single Central Board would have to be most unusual if it were to judge adequately for the whole of the Indian Empire, and it would be difficult, in my opinion, to secure qualified people who could give all their time to it.

(b) I would not advocate a Central Board if all the Provincial Boards now have a thorough and standardized system of censorship. Unless they are the same as to representation and in what is expected from members of the Board, it seems inevitable that differences of opinion should arise.

35. (a) I can only say that the Burma Board was considered very satisfactory as it existed four years ago. It was, however, thoroughly representative from military, police, educational, Burman and other stand points.

(b) Yes, if the proper person could be secured.

36. (a) The Bombay inspectors previous to 1923 were not, in my opinion, satisfactory nor sufficiently well qualified for the work.

I think maturity, judgment and an informal knowledge and opinion about conditions in India and Burma as well as the countries of production are essential.

(b) This is the only system of which I have knowledge. Why should only gentlemen of suitable standing be considered eligible for such Boards? Surely in every province there are certain women qualified for such service and would be willing to serve and do it satisfactorily.

37. (a) I do not know. In Rangoon any objectionable portions of certified films were removed and retained.

(b) I believe safeguards are needed where programmes are not carefully supervised, particularly in mofussil areas.

38. I do.

39. I believe I have.

40. They should be censored.

I have. An utter disregard for prejudices which exists in India and Burma, and in fact unacceptable in any land.

41. I cannot speak comparatively now, as I only occasionally visit the cinemas to see special pictures.

43. There is.

Because we were given to understand that very undesirable films were being privately imported into India.

44. By educating public opinion as to what a good standard is. I feel that at present little help is given in this way, as Press comment confines itself largely to a review of the film to be shown.

45. (a) I should emphatically say that this was most necessary.

**Oral Evidence of Mrs. A. G. BISSET, President of the Committee of the Young Women's Christian Association, Karachi, on Monday, the 21st November 1927.**

*Chairman:* We are sorry to trouble you.

A. It is a great pleasure if I can be of real service.

Q. I understand you were in Burma for some time.

A. Yes.

Q. How long were you in Burma?

A. From May 1920 until November of 1923. 3½ years.

Q. And how long have you been here?

A. Three years on the 3rd January.

Q. You don't mind my putting the question—we have not had the honour of having met you before—what are you doing here?

A. My husband is an accountant in the National Bank of India.

Q. You take an interest in social work?

A. I do; particularly the Young Women's Christian Association, with which I have been connected intimately for years, in an official capacity of some sort.

Q. And you move about much in that capacity. I dare say?

A. No, my experience of India is confined to three cities, Calcutta, Rangoon and Karachi.

Q. You very seldom go to the cinema?

A. Yes, I seldom go. In Burma we were obliged to go so much that for a long time after coming here I didn't go.

*Mr. Coatsman:* We understand that.

*Mrs. Bisset:* In Burma we were obliged as censors to attend every performance. Regardless of changes in programmes, we had to be there.

*Chairman:* But here in Karachi?

A. I suppose I am rather choice in what I select in the films and I don't really go very often.

Q. Where do you go, when you do?

A. To the Capitol chiefly. Sometimes to the Palace.

Q. I suppose you have not seen any Indian film?

A. Not since leaving Burma. There I saw numbers of Burman films.

Q. Yes, I have heard of that. Are they making films in Burma?

A. They have been for at least six years.

Q. Are they very popular with Burmans?

A. I think they are. The Burmese passionately love the pictures. They patronise them in tremendous numbers.

Q. In Rangoon and Mandalay as well?

A. I know Rangoon only.

Q. Are they modelled on Burmese stories?

A. Yes.

Q. You have seen Burman films yourself?

A. Yes. We had to censor them. They were not certified unless two censors saw them. That is the practice in Burma. We had no official censorship in Burma.

Q. What do you mean when you say there was no official censorship?

A. I meant in the sense of a paid whole time censor.

Q. Of course, you were on an official board?

A. Yes, it was official in that sense.

Q. And do they do the Burmese films well?

A. Well, they were very crude in some respects. But notwithstanding that, they were very popular.

Q. And these were not shown in the houses where English programmes were shown?

A. They were for the Burmans of the districts and houses largely or wholly attended by Burmans and Indians.

Q. In the city portions, where the Burmans are gathered in large numbers?

A. Well, they come to any portion to see the pictures. There were 9 theatres there at the time we left.

Q. When were you in Calcutta?

A. I have not been there since 1919.

Q. Now speaking of Karachi, are you satisfied with the specific films which are shown here?

A. I think so. I could hardly give a fair answer to that because I have just gone on rare occasions. I could not in justice to the cinema managers speak of that.

Q. Now, do you think that there should be a different standard of censorship adopted in this country from what is adopted in England?

A. Well, Sir, it seems to me that the influence of pictures is the same everywhere. Human nature after all is very much the same in all of us. And I know in connection with our Censors' board and working with Burman censors—well we had a delightful Burman gentleman, a very senior man on the committee—and I know he felt that a good deal that came out was so difficult to censor, that it would be acceptable if you did not mind the offensive side, but if we really censored it as truly as we ought to censor, there would not be very much passed as acceptable.

Q. That is to say, the trade would suffer?

A. They would suffer if we adopted a stricter rule of censorship.

Q. After all it is an amusement, and people go there for amusement?

A. Yes.

Q. And you think exaggerations in life shown on the screen are inevitable?

A. Yes.

Q. No theatre can be true to life?

A. No. It is extremely exaggerated in the wrong way I think.

Q. But do you think that the people are not able to give true value to what they see on the screen?

A. That same question was brought out in the questionnaire and I think they understand a great deal more of it than . . . . .

Q. Critics imagine?

A. I am sure. I could not imagine a great many people going to these picture houses unless they understood more than they are said to do. I am speaking of the quite uneducated boy.

Q. You give them credit for a little bit of shrewdness and understanding?

A. Yes.

Q. In answer to question 27 (a) you say, "I feel that western civilisation is assuredly misrepresented and lowered".

A. I am really quoting the words from the question. I do believe it most surely.

Mr. Green: You mean that the films themselves do not truly represent the life?

A. They do not represent it. The things that are shown we do not do in the normal type of life at home.

To Chairman: I do think that people think it is what we all do. A particular film that was passed as being suitable for all India was brought

to Burma, and then the title alone created a question in the mind of our military representative and he said to the Commissioner of Police "Do you think that has anything to do with a certain story of Victoria Cross? If it has, it is not fit to show in this country to anybody." The Commissioner said, "The whole Committee will sit on it."

Q. You say it was not suitable for any section of the public?

A. Yes.

Q. Either European, Indian, educated or uneducated?

A. Yes, absolutely offensive. How it ever passed—it could not have passed—a Committee of Censors, but it did pass an official censor, and then the comment made by this charming Burman gentleman was "It is true, is it not?"

Mr. Green: Can you give us the name of that specific film?

A. "Five Nights" by Victoria Cross. I referred to it without mentioning it in the questionnaire answer because it did not ask for names.

Chairman: You think it ought not to have been passed at all?

A. Never.

Q. In your experience was that the only one which you have mentioned?

A. There were others which we had to cut. There was a beautiful film called "The Isle of Zorda." That went up to Simla to the Government. The answer from Bombay was that the objectionable part was not in it when it was censored. That was the defence.

Q. I remember to have read about it.

A. The report came from the Inspector of European Schools in Burma. He was the man who raised the objection, and was a censor himself. The first section, which contained 12 reels, had been shown and the second arrived. The first had charmed every one with its wonderful beauty and then the second came with a slave market scene.

Q. There was a slave market scene which I saw the other day in "The Lady of the Harem," and I do not know if this was different. Was the objection to the slave market itself or to the way in which it was depicted.

A. It was an objection to the whole conception of the slave market, the condition of the women in it and their handling by the buyers of slaves was very derogatory in every way.

Q. Was it an objection to the whole idea of a slave market?

A. No. I would not say so.

Q. It was more the method of presenting it?

A. Yes.

Q. I suppose you agree that the cinema is a method of bringing people in the east in touch with the life in the west?

A. It is a wonderful factor.

Q. It is only very few people who can afford to go to the west and learn the mode of life there, so that the cinema is a factor which should be used for improving the knowledge of the people of the east?

A. Yes.

Q. I mean to say, they must know about the westerners, they must know about their cottages, their towns, their trams, their buses, their trains, their activities—all these things must be learnt.

A. Freedom of life in a wholesome way.

Q. And freedom of the sexes also.

A. Yes, in a wholesome way.

Q. You agree it should be done?

A. I think so, and it would help so much to better understanding.

Q. No doubt there is some risk attendant upon such effort always because they are not likely to understand in the first instance. These things which

you object to,—if you think they can be shown to a western audience.—would you prohibit it to an eastern audience?

A. I think I would. There is so much I disapprove of for home people in the films.

Q. Would you prohibit it for them also?

A. I would prohibit it for them, yes.

Q. You and I may take that view, but the bulk of the people may take a different view. I dare say you do not agree with many of the modern modes of dress?

A. I am afraid I do not. One has to be tolerant in any case, however.

Q. Having regard to the aspect which I have mentioned, namely, the necessity for instructing people in the manners of the west and the necessity for giving the audience an amusement, you must exaggerate life in order to make the cinema attractive, because if you merely depict the ordinary thing no people would go and therefore there must be some exaggeration.

A. You think the sensational element is almost necessary in some way.

Mr. Green: The dramatic element as opposed to humdrum life.

A. Did you by any chance see "Three Wise Fools"? It is one of the most beautiful things I have seen on the film. There was no exaggeration of things. It could happen in real life and it was beautiful. You could not criticise it in a single particular. That was shown here on the cinema.

Chairman: I am thinking of the difficulties of the trade. They have to attract the public. They have to live and they have to give some amusement. People go there not for instruction but for amusement after a hard day's work and you have to educate people in the manners, habits and customs of different classes of people. These factors have to be kept in mind and at the same time you have to keep in mind that it has not got a demoralising effect? Is it not so?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you seen the rules of censorship? I dare say you are familiar with the rules of censorship as they obtain in Bombay and in Burma?

A. I was familiar with the Government orders on the matter, but I have not kept my file.

Q. You were familiar with the Bombay rules?

A. They sent us a copy.

Q. You may refresh your memory with that. (Shown to witness).

A. When do these date from?

Mr. Green: 1920 I think.

A. That was just when film censoring began. This paper was circulated to us and it is based on Government's safeguards.

Chairman: In fact it is really based on what was done by the British Board of Censors. They laid down certain rules for themselves and these were adapted to this country. Having worked those rules, do you think that anything should be added to these rules? Have you considered that aspect of the matter?

A. I have not. Not in detail.

Q. Your view is that a certain amount of sensation or the sensational parts might be omitted, which are now allowed to be passed?

A. I think you would destroy the fabric of a great many of the films if you prohibited that. It would mean the whole standard of film production would have to be changed, otherwise you would have to cut out a great deal and the continuity and the conception of the plot would have to go.

Q. That is the danger. Then what is your advice as you realise the difficulties on both sides?

A. I wish very much it were possible to co-operate with the production centres for films. In 1924 my husband and I went to Los Angeles and there



I found the son of a friend of mine connected with Hollywood--The Palmer Photo-Play Co. I met the manager of it and he said, "What is the opinion in India of our western films?" I said, "Well, they make us laugh very often. The Indian and the Burman community are convulsed sometimes over your inconsistencies and misrepresentations of life, say, in a Muslim film or story." And then I mentioned to him the one I have mentioned to you, that is, "The Virgin of Stamboul." He said, "Would you be willing to write for our paper? They produce plays only. They are producing scenarios, they are producing plots. Would you be willing to write an article on what the standard should be?" Really I did not feel myself equal to that and I did not do it. I am perfectly certain if some one from here and with judgment could do so it would be a good thing.

Q. Give them hints?

A. Write to them frankly. They are teaching other people to write stories and conceive of ideas for new films.

Q. So that we must be more in touch with the producing area?

A. It would mean a great deal if it could be done.

Q. In fact we were told in Bombay that certain Indian characters were objected to by the people here and their agents came to know it and they improved it later.

A. Why they should have gone on all these years without greater deference to Indian opinion I cannot quite understand except that whatever is produced seems to find a market.

Q. What do you think of the films shown in England as compared with the films shown in India? Do you think there is any marked difference?

A. The last time I was there it was only for a short time and I was not quite well. Therefore I could not say much about it.

Q. Your feeling is that a little stricter censorship is required?

A. Yes, I think so.

Q. I suppose you are willing to leave to the judgment of the censoring officers matters on which you cannot pass any rules?

A. I think everything depends on the personnel of your Board. That is the vital factor in India.

Q. So that you would rather advocate that each film should be censored by two or more members of the Board?

A. Yes.

Q. You do not believe in merely a paid officer doing it?

A. I have said in the questionnaire answer that if you can find a proper person, yes, because it is a tremendously big piece of work.

Q. It is a troublesome piece of work too.

A. In Burma we had an enormous amount of work, we had sometimes to attend 2 or 3 mornings a week, and see thousands of feet of film.

Q. Had you any difficulty in finding men in Burma?

A. Apparently none.

Q. Of course, you have no knowledge of Bombay?

A. No.

Q. Your suggestion is, "The source of production seems the place of remedy, since such films will continue to be imported, if produced."

A. I think it is such a tremendously difficult problem really.

Q. In answer to question No. 43 you say, "There is. Because we were given to understand that very undesirable films were being privately imported into India." Is that based on any definite information?

A. It was so. I do not feel at liberty to communicate it to the newspapers.

Q. If you have any definite information about it we should like to have it in camera if you do not mind.

*Mr. Coatsman*: I think you said you are connected with the Y. W. C. A.?

*A.* I am the President of the Committee in Karachi.

*Q.* Do you come in close touch with the girls?

*A.* Very close contact in some cases.

*Q.* Have you any reason to believe that the effect of cinema going is bad on these girls?

*A.* I could not answer that. I feel from my contact with Anglo-Indian girls in India that they need safeguarding a very great deal.

*Q.* Your general impression is then that the effect is deleterious on the whole?

*A.* I think so,—not inspirational most of the time.

*Colonel Crawford*: You told the Chairman that the censorship needed tightening up. Can you give us the name of any film in which you think the censorship might be tightened up?

*A.* I cannot tell you because of my lack of more constant attendance at the films.

*Q.* Have you any remarks to make on scenes showing night clubs?

*A.* I feel them most harmful.

*Q.* In certain ways?

*A.* Certain phases of them, and I think the idea is in many circles that that is what a great many of us do and that we believe in and endorse it.

*Q.* Have you any remarks to make about the close up kissing scenes?

*A.* I dislike the intensive long drawn out effects that many of them have.

*Q.* You think they are definitely harmful?

*A.* I do.

*Q.* Can you give us any impression as to whether the children in India are taking keenly to the cinema?

*A.* Four years ago they were being taken to the early shows freely. When I think of children I think of those up to 12 or 13. They were freely taken then, but I hesitate to say anything about the present time.

*Q.* I notice that you would prohibit children from going to the cinema in certain cases.

*A.* Yes. I say that "certified for adults only" may be the solution in safeguarding younger people from certain types of films.

*Q.* You do not think at the same time that it advertises a certain picture?

*A.* There is always that very great danger. The emphasising of it only creates curiosity.

*Q.* Would you rather suggest the institution of children's performances?

*A.* I think that would be ideal.

*Q.* The exhibitors say that it would not be a paying proposition. If they have children's entertainment once a week say, do you think every parent will be inclined to take his children to such shows?

*A.* I believe that it might have to be a matter of education and cultivating an attitude of mind about it. The parents themselves very often have no proper standard for their children, as to what amuses and entertains them. Jackie Coogan films always attract children and very rarely do you take any exception to things shown in a film like that.

*Q.* I think you alluded to the fact that in your experience as a censor in Burma quite a different type of film was going out into the mofussil from what was shown in the big cities?

*A.* That is what we were told.

*Q.* They were a poor class of film altogether?

*A.* In every way. In fact the inference was made—one gentleman in Rangoon said, "I am perfectly certain that this would be turned out in the United States as being utterly unsuitable for them". This coarse sort of

production would never be endorsed there, and I have heard that there were things produced for foreign use which were not useable in America. They were very poor films, very worn out and old.

*Q.* From your experience in Burma do you think the locally produced film was gaining in popularity?

*A.* It seemed that they were very interested in their own films. There were one or two houses particularly which catered for our Indian and Burman communities, and they were packed to the doors, and they were also packed in the case of those serials where you have hair-breadth escapes and dashing, remarkable scenes, etc.

*Q.* There is nothing harmful in that type of film?

*A.* No.

*Q.* You have made a valuable suggestion that we should get into touch with producers in order to tell them what the requirements of India were.

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* I suppose you are possibly aware that only about one per cent. of the total receipts on American productions come from the East?

*A.* Is that so?

*Q.* That would hardly influence them. They are catering really for their own audiences, they have 18,000 theatres. Possibly if you applied your constructive proposals to the locally produced industry we might have a better chance.

*A.* I did not realise it was so very small.

*Mr. Green:* I am particularly interested in your very interesting evidence, because I have been on a Board of Censors also. I want to confine my questions to that aspect. You told us in your time in Rangoon you got tired of censoring because it took something like four hours a week.

*A.* I did not say that I got tired of it, but it was a little trying. We were obliged to go one evening every week to a cinema. The theatre changes its programme twice a week and we were obliged to be there to see that everything was in order and nothing had slipped in which should have been censored. That was very tedious.

*Q.* Can you see any objection to that part of the work being done by paid officers of the Board?

*A.* No.

*Q.* It is particularly a suitable class of work to be given to them?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* You also told us that all films were seen by two members of the Board before they were certified by the Board?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Could you tell me how much work that gave you approximately?

*A.* There were some weeks when there was very little to be done, possibly, 10 or 12,000 feet. Again there were other weeks in which we did 30,000 feet.

*Q.* That would be an hour a day?

*A.* I used to work from 9 or 9-30 to 12 or 12-30, sometimes for some days of the week, but that was not ordinarily the case.

*Q.* You had three, four or five hours work a week?

*A.* Easily.

*Q.* The amount of films imported and produced in India has increased very considerably. In fact, I can give you the figures. Last year in Burma alone the amount of films censored was 800,000 feet, the year before 700,000 feet, and the year before that, 600,000 feet. It is increasing. If the work increases and if you have a system under which every film has to be seen by two members of the Board, can you get ladies and gentlemen of sufficient leisure besides other qualifications to devote themselves to such work in your judgment?

A. I do not think I can give you a very helpful answer to that. I do know it was difficult for some busy people to attend, and the censoring was done mainly by a few of us. It is inevitable.

Q. May I put it to you in a different way? The film work in Bombay is 4½ times as much as it is in Burma, and that I think will probably account largely for the fact that all films cannot be seen by two members of the Board.

A. I see that.

Q. All primary inspection is done by paid officials of the Board. The Secretary is an educational officer who is a half time officer of the Board, and they have an Inspector of high educational qualifications. He has travelled in the west and draws a pay from Rs. 300 to Rs. 500 *plus* certain allowances. If there is any doubt whatsoever in the report of the Inspector or the Secretary, then it is referred to a sub-committee of at least two members of the Board, and if necessary the whole Board will see it. From my experience I can say that even that amount of work is a considerable tax on the members of the Board. I was wondering—you are a little doubtful whether if there was a considerable increase of work in Burma it would be possible to carry on.

A. There is a possibility of it. I believe in taking your part in the life out here as much as you can. I have no idea how much time it will take now. It was a real service one could render.

Q. This is the type of question I have put to other witnesses. Do you think every film should be seen by two actual censors? An alternative I have suggested is that the Board of Censorship should remain as it is more or less in Bombay and Calcutta as a Board of referees but that we should have a higher class of stipendiary censors and that if necessary every film should be seen by two of those officers. It is to a certain extent the English system of working. I was wondering if that would appeal to you.

A. It does appeal to me because it meets the need for qualified censorship and at the same time does not put a burden on people who are not willing to offer themselves for such work at present. Is the standard of censorship at Bombay better than it was four years ago?

Q. It is difficult to judge. I should say probably it is, largely for the reason that the stipendiary staff was reduced. We had to economise as the expenditure was too extravagant. And there is I think greater consistency. I won't say that no film ever passes which ought not to. I think that is possible. The contrary is almost too much to expect, there must be differences of opinion if nothing else.

A. At that time they had two Indian students who had failed for the B. A. at Bombay.

Q. I think I can correct you there. For the last five years at any rate both the Inspectors were highly qualified. One had a European degree.

A. Well these were two young men, who had tried for the B. A. One was a Parsi and one a Hindu. That was in 1922.

Q. I joined the Board at the end of 1922 and at that time, I think, to start with they had four inspectors. Two of them were to my knowledge highly qualified. I do not know who the other two were because they had left the Board before I joined.

A. Possibly they were the two Indians I was referring to.

Q. From the very start they were gentlemen with degrees. If it has been represented to you they were young students it is somewhat unfair.

A. This was at the beginning of 1921, though I may be mistaken.

Q. It must have been before pucca censoring began if it ever was so, which I doubt. There was no pucca system of examining films before. It is probably a fact that prior to 1921 the films had been inadequately examined.

A. The films I spoke of came from Bombay.

**Q.** One of the difficulties of having two highly qualified officers to inspect every film is that of expense, and it has been suggested that the financial difficulty would be very greatly lessened if it was practicable to have a Central Board for the whole of India subject, of course, to the right of any Local Government or local authority to suspend a licence. I gather from your written evidence you are not in favour in this?

**A.** You would have to have people who are properly qualified to deal with such a thing and to give their entire time to it. Unless they could do it adequately for the whole of the Empire it would not seem feasible. It may be; I could hardly say.

**Q.** The idea in that case would be to have two or four, according to the amount of work—it will probably be four—really properly paid officers of very high attainments with an advisory board to act as referees, drawn from all sections of the community.

**A.** It might be indeed feasible but I do know that the great complaint received was of having only one port of entry. They said it congested them too much, and they could not get the material to go on with if they waited for certification of everything at one centre. That was the trade's suggestion. They said it was not a workable system. Sometimes when films came in they went straight on to them, uncertified, so as to give them a programme; otherwise they would be without films.

**Q.** If we could overcome that difficulty—I think I could possibly suggest ways.

**A.** If you could satisfy the trade in that respect the Central Board, as you suggest, ought to be a success.

**Q.** There is one further suggestion, that besides the Central Board, which should censor all imported films, each province ought to have a duly constituted board or authority to censor films locally produced. Do you think that that would be good? It would certainly be a hardship for films produced in Burma to be sent possibly to Calcutta, possibly Delhi or Bombay; and it might also be a hardship for topical films to be sent. If subsidiary boards could be also run to deal with local production, would not that appeal to you?

**A.** Yes, it would. I wish to add that the Burma Board did not give its services free. The Government of India gave its orders and the different provincial boards were to arrange to take care of their own censoring. The films were charged for at Rs. 5 per thousand feet and out of that money each film censor who was an active censor received Rs. 20 per meeting.

**Written Statement of Mr. REWASHANKER PANCHOLI, Proprietor, Capitol Theatre, Karachi, dated the 11th November 1927.**

1. I control four Cinemas in Karachi, namely, the Capitol, the Imperial, the Picture House and the Empire. I also control the Empire Film Company, with offices at Karachi and Bombay. We import about 24 pictures from America, yearly.

2. About 15 per cent. of the total population of large towns patronize cinema films. In smaller towns the percentage is as low as 5 per cent., 20 per cent. of the educated and 10 per cent. of the non-educated classes see imported films; and 10 per cent. of the educated and 20 per cent. of the non-educated classes see films produced in India.

(b) The cinema usually has an appeal to the working and the middle classes.

(c) Hardly any.

3. Imported films with farce-comedy plots, with stunts, adopted from internationally famous novels, lives of historically famous persons, gorgeous productions with massive settings and drapery combined with very strong love stories. Such pictures are mostly successful in this country. They

have a general appeal. But in the smaller towns pictures with a great deal of excitement are more successful than straight dramas.

4. Yes. Exhibitors in every part of this country are doing their best to increase cinema patronage.

5. Not many Indian films are produced. About 52 pictures are released every year to the professional houses. These are sufficient to keep one Theatre going on a weekly change of programme. But in towns like Bombay, Ahmedabad, Karachi, we have as many as three or four or five houses who show Indian pictures. In such cases, old pictures are repeated.

(a) Fairly good quality.

(b) They are getting more popular every day.

(c) Theatres showing Indian pictures cost less to operate. Attendance is also larger than in theatres showing imported pictures. Consequently it is quite profitable to exhibit Indian pictures, provided of course that the exhibitor is able to obtain good First-run pictures at right prices. Examples: "Krishna-Janma" (Hindustan) "Gul-Bakavali" (Kohinoor).

6. (a) Past experience shows that pictures of Indian national life (with Indian characters) are less successful than "fight and excitement" class of pictures. Mythological and historical films cost more to produce and the attendance is smaller unless the subjects dealt with are popular throughout the country, like "Life of Lord Krishna", etc.

(b) Historical pictures appeal only to the educated. Religious pictures to the particular sect of the religion with which the picture deals. Consequently they cannot be shown successfully in all parts of India.

7. No difficulty is experienced in obtaining good pictures for British and Indian troops. Hardly any percentage of Indian troops patronize cinemas. The films at present being shown to the British troops in various military stations throughout India are quite suitable. Pictures as mentioned in paragraph 3 are generally popular with the British troops.

8. There is one great draw-back. The industry is not organized. This business in cinemas and cinema films has no united voice. I am personally far from satisfied. The main difficulties for further progress of the business are as under:—

(a) *Import Duty*.—This is very heavy. It is charged at 30 per cent. on the tariff rate of four annas per foot. New or used films do not make any difference in this respect, neither does the Government give any convenience when further copies of the same subject production are imported by the same importer who imported the initial copy of the said subject production. On invoice cost it works out at about 40 per cent. in case of new films, and 150 per cent. in case of used films. The duty on raw films is 15 per cent. on the invoice value which is a great hindrance to the progress of Indian-produced pictures. It is for the Finance Member to find out means to fill the deficit which might result by reducing this Custom Royalty. In my opinion, the duty on raw-films should be 2½ per cent. of the invoice value and the duty on imported finished films should be 10 per cent. of the invoice value, while duty on second copy should be only 2½ per cent. of invoice value, because the importer has already paid a substantial duty on the first copy and the subject production is absolutely the same.

(b) *Entertainment Tax*.—In my opinion this should be entirely done away with. The cinema is a cheap class of amusement within the reach of the working and the middle classes and every anna makes a difference to this class of cinema-goers which comprises the majority. I am sure if this tax were done away with the cinema attendance would increase very largely. Bombay Presidency is the only area in India where this tax is in force. However it will make little difference in continuing the tax on classes

upwards of Re. 1. I strongly advocate that there is a great necessity of removing the tax from annas 8, annas 12, and Re. 1 classes. Let it here be mentioned that in most of the theatres located in Indian areas the tax is paid by exhibitors from their own pockets because the public, consisting of working and middle classes, cannot afford it. Exhibitors charge it to their profit and loss account.

(c) *Theatre Control*.—One big firm in India is just now in position to control a large number of theatres, specially in the key cities like Bombay, Calcutta and Rangoon. Consequently the trade is not free. An independent importer of foreign films cannot obtain business in towns where almost all houses are either owned or controlled by this company. This company also imports foreign films and in consideration of their theatre holdings are able to outbid the independent buyers. Government in America has taken this question for a thorough enquiry. To control theatres is the only method to monopolize the business. Big businessmen in America and elsewhere have been trying for the past many years to find a solution of this problem, but unfortunately no solution is apparently plausible.

(d) *Censorship*.—At present we have Film Censor Boards in Bombay, Calcutta, Madras and Rangoon. A film importer in Lahore, Delhi, Karachi, Peshawar or anywhere else has to proceed to either of these cities in order to get his pictures ready for professional exhibitions. This system was quite in order when there were no film importers in other towns except in those in which the Censor Boards were established. But now, there are film importers in Karachi, Ahmedabad, Meerut, Lahore, Delhi and a few other towns of which I am not sure. I strongly recommend the opening of Censor Boards at least in Karachi and Lahore or Delhi, immediately. The Government charges five rupees per reel of film as a censorship charge and this is quite sufficient to cover the cost of additional Boards (with Inspector or Inspectors) in the above two towns specified.

9. No, good films are readily obtainable at reasonable prices. There is certainly a tendency towards monopoly specially by a company who owns theatres. All the good films are bought by such a theatre-holding company, who is able to pay more to foreign producers than other independent buyers, on account of its theatre holdings as mentioned in paragraph 8 (c).

10. Yes, the systems of "block bookings" "key theatres" and "first run" exist in India. Block booking is a sort of contract whereby the exhibitor has to take a few bad pictures also in order to get as many good pictures. The disadvantages are entirely to the public. Because the public is made to see these few bad pictures just as the exhibitor is made to take these few bad pictures. I am of the opinion that each picture must be taken on its individual merits. "First run" is what in other words may be called premier showing. If the picture is very good, it is repeated either in the same theatre or in a "second run" theatre. Sometimes pictures are repeated as many as three, four or five times. I have no comments to offer on this subject as this subject rests entirely on the public. "Key theatres" are those which are "first run" theatres located in larger towns like Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Rangoon, Colombo, Karachi, Lahore, Delhi, etc. If these are monopolized, the independent owner of films loses a very very large portion of his income. The monopoly of "key theatres" is a great hindrance to the future progress of the cinema industry, because the monopolist put in these theatres whatever class of pictures they own themselves, irrespective of the public demand, and the public is made to see these pictures, because all other theatres in the town are expected to be "second run" houses. The "key theatres" should always remain independent, where only the best of pictures obtainable on the World's market may be exhibited.

11. The facility of previewing films has not been granted to exhibitors of this country, except in Bombay and Calcutta. This is a question entirely between the film owners and the exhibitors. \*

12. The amusement-tax is a very great handicap not only to the exhibitors, but to the general public as well as explained in detail in paragraph 8 (b).

13. The present tariff rate of Customs duty on imported films very largely affects the general public. Because the film importer charges it to the exhibitor and the exhibitor charges it to the public. If this duty were considerably lowered, the admission price, specially in the smaller towns, may be lowered and decidedly attendance in such houses would increase. The duty on other articles connected with the cinema business is also very heavy,—15 per cent. It should be somewhere between 5 and 7½ per cent. This will make the articles cheaper, consequently there will be more use of such articles and consequently more import.

14. Yes, very largely, because the Government will be preparing the school boys as future customers of the public theatres. In the case of adults, the Government will be showing to them the great advantages of the motion picture, thereby arousing their interest, which is bound to result in their becoming patrons of the public theatres. There is however very little, or absolutely no demand of educational pictures by professional theatres. The public does not pay to be educated. However such films may be very advantageously employed in Churches, Schools, Health Associations, etc., by Government or its Agencies.

15. Yes. Conditions in India are greatly favourable in production of pictures on large scales. The reasons are:—

- (a) Good Climate.
- (b) Historical places of interest.
- (c) Ancient culture.
- (d) Indian mythology.
- (e) Scenes of Great Interest.
- (f) Large Population.

16. Yes. The persons just now employed in the production of motion pictures in India are of sufficient knowledge and enterprise to work on a large scale, but they have no means. Most of them require development and strict superintendence. In order to develop them, it would be necessary to "import" a few men from foreign film producing countries.

17. There is sufficient capital in India to finance larger picture producing companies, but I cannot say if it will be forthcoming when required. The trouble with Indian capitalists is that it is very difficult to make them put their confidence into an enterprise like the production of moving pictures; they argue that cinema films do not have market value like other commodities. They can be either bought or sold, hired or rented by persons interested in the industry only. In a way they are right.

18. Yes. Government can very largely help the production of motion pictures in this country by the following actions:—

- (a) Abolishing or very largely reducing the import duty on raw films, chemicals and other material and machinery required for production.
- (b) Abolishing the entertainment tax on theatres where Indian pictures are shown.
- (c) Patronizing Indian pictures.
- (d) Giving cheap land to private enterprises for studio purposes.
- (e) Government propaganda whereby films may come to be known as of commercial value like other commodities.
- (f) Giving financial help to private enterprises.
- (g) Starting of a number of syndicates or "trusts" to combat monopolists.



19. An average film production in India costs somewhere between Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 15,000. An average film production in America costs somewhere between Rs. 75,000 and Rs. 2,00,000. The cost of super specials in United States go as high as a million dollars. At least so says the trade press, like "Moving Picture World," published in New York.

20. My suggestions do call for expenditure on the part of the Government and they are quite justifiable as far as the motion picture industry in India is concerned. I have no knowledge of other needs of the country, neither of Government revenue.

(b) The deficit can be met by Royalties on other merchandise which are in the way of luxuries, like expensive imported motor cars costing over, say, Rs. 3,000, imported silk, jewels, etc. In my opinion the cinema is a great necessity to the public. It ought to be made as cheap as possible. The cinema is a public institution.

21. The films as are being shown to-day are quite good and do not require any intervening on the part of the Government. The moral standards of the pictures are being well guarded by the Censor Boards. The Government opening a distributing agency would be for Government to enter commercialism, which is not desired. There is no need for the Government as an agency to undertake the management of the film industry. But the Government can very largely help the business of cinemas and cinema films in this country by:—

(a) Advocating the use of propaganda films at their own expense as mentioned in paragraph 14.

(b) Granting facilities to the trade as mentioned in paragraph 8 (a, b, c, d).

(c) Prohibiting theatre control as mentioned in paragraph 10.

22. It is very difficult for India to participate in the Imperial Conference resolution of exhibiting British Empire films. In the first place British Empire films are so below the highly entertaining standard of American films. Audiences are getting much more educated now-a-days. They demand the best in every way. Pictures produced in England are expensive because they do not have the same international market as American films, consequently to show British Empire pictures in cinemas in India would be to make cinemas more expensive.

(a) India's participation in the Imperial Conference resolution regarding British Empire films in the British Empire would perhaps assist the Indian cinema producing industry because in that case Indian films may be shown in England and the colonies where they are now denied exhibition.

(b) In a very little way.

(c) The standard of American films is not improved because India or the British Empire wants an improved standard. American producers have always been on the improvement path because their own country wants better pictures. In the United States and Canada there are 14,000 pictures theatres. In India there are 400.

I would strongly suggest to keep trade free. Let us take pictures from wherever we get better pictures at reasonable prices. The exhibitors are the best judges of what the public wants.

23. (a) By way of producing topicals, gazettes, news-reels like the Pathé Gazette of London and the International News of New York.

(b) By asking the various Governments of the World to patronize the News Reels produced in this country.

24. No. The class of pictures just now being shown throughout the country are quite good and do not have any injurious effect upon the public.

(b) No.

(c) Revolutionary pictures. Religious pictures which humiliate other religions. Absolutely nude pictures, pictures with great many sensuous scenes. Pictures presenting distorted views on established subjects, etc.

(1) They are harmful to the public because they create very bad taste. They are harmful to the country because they may create ill-feeling between two different religions. They are harmful to the Government because they may preach disobedience. They are harmful generally because they may state wrong to be right.

(d) Yes. Censorship is quite adequate as regards "sex" and "crime" films.

(e) None whatsoever.

(f) Not necessary to answer.

25. It would be better if the censors have knowledge of customs both in the East and the West. But on the whole no special consideration is required.

16. (a) Sufficient care is being taken already by the Censors.

(b) "Vir Durgadas"—It was objected to in certain places only and was stopped.

27. (a) American films try to portray facts and I emphatically believe that they have never humiliated Western Society even in a single instance. It is possible that they may have made a technical error in some particular place but on the whole their presentation of Western civilization is quite correct. Western civilization may have been lowered in the eyes of those particular Indians only who have gone abroad, but American pictures certainly give it the most flattering aspect. Some of the imported films are not appreciated by the uneducated Indians, but are certainly not misunderstood by any class whatsoever. It is the easiest thing to understand a cinema film. The best of results follow a regular attendance at the cinema. Works of literary men are transformed into celluloid strips and cinema-goers are not only entertained, but educated in many respects. Of course, the entertainment is primarily necessary in any film whatsoever. My only suggestion in this respect would be to let the exhibitor be the sole judge of what his public wants.

There are a number of pictures being shown in India and abroad which very greatly misrepresent and, in some instances, humiliate Indian or Eastern civilisation. All such pictures are foreign productions.

28. Children form the smallest percentage of cinema patronage. Every year exhibitors are making more attempts to build up children's patronage by holding special children's matinees. I cannot think of any picture, either imported or produced in India, (since the Censor Board have been established) that may have had any bad effect on children and adolescents. Of course before the Censor Boards there were many examples of:—

Nude pictures.

Sophisticated sensuous love pictures.

Pictures preaching disobedience.

I do not find any pictures of these classes now. The type of pictures mentioned above are harmful to the children because they create very bad taste.

29. Let such a power be vested in a local authority, as is already done. I don't think an example can arise, but in case it comes up the local authority can well take care of it. He should be an official of high standing.

30. In the first place many children do not understand the films. They merely have to accompany parents. On the other hand, children who can fully understand and appreciate films it would be a crime to bar. I think there is absolutely no necessity for restricting children as many parents of the better class attend cinemas simply in order to accompany their children.

31. The censorship at present is quite satisfactory.

32. The Censorship is quite satisfactory, but we want one or two more Boards like those we have in Bombay, Calcutta, Madras and Rangoon. I have a plan to suggest in this respect which is as under:—

(a) That one All-India Board may be established somewhere in Delhi which would consist of:—

A Nominee of Government from the Police.

A Nominee of Government from the Health Department.

A Nominee of Government from the State.

3 More nominees of Government from the non-officials.

1 representative of exhibitors.

1 representative of distributors (importers).

1 representative of producers of India.

(b) This will make nine members in the Central Board.

(c) There should be whole-time paid Inspectors in the following towns:—  
Delhi, Lahore, Karachi, Bombay, Calcutta, Rangoon, Madras,  
Colombo.

(d) These Inspectors should possess great international knowledge, be well versed with the affairs of the cinema industry in general, be of a high social standing and of unimpeachable character.

(e) Every Inspector must have a Local Advisory Board which must also consist of nine members on the same lines as specified in (a).

(f) All members of the Board will be honorary.

(g) The Inspector sees a film given to him for censoring. If he finds anything objectionable, he must first seek the Advisory Board to see the film and decide if some portions are objectionable or not. If the Inspector and the Advisory Board are not able to decide, the matter might be referred to the Central Board. The whole thing should be based on the Criminal Law Courts in the country. We have the Lower Court (in the Inspector) the Sessions (in the Advisory Board) and the Appellate Court (in the Central Board). Of course provisions will have to be made for the film importers. In case the Inspector is unjust in his censoring, the film importer might appeal to the Local Advisory Board and even, if in a case the Inspector and the Local Advisory Board are both unjust, the film Importer may have a chance of appealing to the Central Board.

(h) Films passed by Inspectors in the towns specified in (c) should be held good for public exhibition throughout India, Burma and Ceylon (including Native States).

(i) Rs. 5 per reel may be charged as the Censor Fee.

(j) Certificates should be issued under the signature of the President of the Central Board. But Local Advisory Boards should also be in position to issue temporary certificates under the signature of their own president. This is necessary for emergencies.

33. Stricter censorship would very much come in the way of the recreations of the public. It would also involve a falling off in the attendance. Certainly it would be unduly interfering with the freedom required for artistic and inspirational development.

34. I have already given my plan of the Central Board, Local Advisory Boards and Inspectors in paragraph 32 (a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, j).

35. The present constitution of the Censor Boards is not satisfactory because the members of such boards do not understand the affairs of the industry. I agree that they are men of the highest intelligence, but they ought to have a knowledge of the cinema industry also. My suggestion is that there ought to be one exhibitor, one distributor and one producer on the Board to guide the remaining members who may be officials and non-officials combined.

(h) Yes.

36. The present system is quite satisfactory. I cannot say of other inspectors but I can vouch for the inspector in Bombay. He is quite fit for his job. The only necessary qualification required for censoring motion pictures is common sense.

(b) No, it is not necessary for the entire Board to see a film when there is absolutely nothing in it. 99 per cent. of the films are passed by Inspectors without a single comment because there is nothing to comment upon. Secondly, it would cost the Government a great deal to engage qualified non-officials for this work, because I am sure they could not be available as honorary workers. The non-officials know the least of the cinema industry; they have perhaps never entered a cinema theatre in all their life. It is easier to criticize than to be correct.

37. Yes, such powers are generally vested in the City Magistrate.

38. Yes, "Vir Durgadas", "Moon of Israel" and a few more, but not many.

39. None whatsoever.

40. No, they are not necessary.

41. Yes. I have noticed. Formerly we used to find a number of immoral and nude pictures on the market. Now-a-days they are not even produced because there is censorship in America, India, England and elsewhere.

42. I have outlined my plan in paragraph 32 for trade representatives on the Censor Boards.

43. Apparently there is no need for a stricter control over the import of cinema films.

44. By patronizing the cinemas and carrying on a vigorous propaganda in favour of moving pictures in general.

45. Apparently there is no need of any Government control over the Indian film production.

### **Oral Evidence of Mr. REWASHANKAR PANCHOLI, Proprietor, Capitol Theatre, Karachi, on Monday, the 21st November 1927.**

*Chairman:* How long have you been running these theatres here?

A. Since 1918.

Q. You began it as a business?

A. Yes.

Q. I mean you built the theatres yourself?

A. I rented the theatres; they are not mine.

Q. None of them are your own?

A. No.

Q. There are four theatres which you control?

A. Yes. The Capitol, the Imperial, the Picture House and the Empire.

Q. Now, to whom do they belong?

A. The Capitol belongs to a Marwari, the Imperial to Haroon Brothers, the Picture House to Shiva Ram, and the Empire to Moti Lal.

Q. Why did they build them, simply to hire out?

A. Yes.

Q. They built them for cinema shows?

A. The Capitol and the Empire were specially built for us.

Q. At your request? You wanted to become an exhibitor and you asked them to build them?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you enter into any lease?

A. Yes.

Q. For how many years?

A. For 5 years.

Q. For a 5 years lease they were prepared to build a theatre?

A. Yes, with an option of renewing it every 3 years.

**Q.** All these four theatres were built specially for cinema shows?

**A.** No. The Capitol and the Imperial were built for theatricals but as no theatrical companies come here they have been converted into cinemas.

**Q.** And besides these four there are five others in Karachi city?

**A.** Yes; two are controlled by Madan Theatres.

**Q.** Who built those?

**A.** The Star Cinema was built by some Hindus.

**Q.** Merely for the purposing of hiring it out?

**A.** Yes, nobody has got their own theatre.

**Q.** No exhibitor has his own theatre?

**A.** No, Sir.

**Q.** And the theatres have been built for cinemas?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** All within how many years?

**A.** The Palace was built in 1912, the Star in 1916 or 17.

**Q.** All built after 1912?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Are there any more theatres in contemplation in Karachi? Are there more going to be built?

**A.** I do not think so.

**Q.** You have reached the maximum limit?

**A.** Yes, there are too many cinemas now already for Karachi.

**Q.** Still you began with one?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And you have made it into four now. How is it then? When did you take up the last one?

**A.** About 3 months back.

**Q.** Surely you must have found it attractive to go into? Is it a paying proposition to become an exhibitor?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Then why do you say the maximum limit has been reached?

**A.** It won't pay to have more. Now we have got two sections, one is for Indian pictures and the other for American or English pictures.

**Q.** Call them Western films.

**A.** You see there are certain cinemas which show certain pictures such as serials, etc.

**Q.** What are the theatres which show only Western pictures?

**A.** The Capitol.

**Q.** What are the other theatres which show only Western films?

**A.** The Palace, the Crown. The rest show Indian as well as Western films.

**Q.** Is there any theatre which shows only Indian films?

**A.** Our Imperial theatre shows only Indian films.

**Q.** No Western films at all?

**A.** No, except sometimes when we are short of pictures; but generally we want to show only Indian pictures.

**Q.** Where do you get your Indian pictures from?

**A.** From Bombay.

**Q.** How long have you been showing Indian pictures?

**A.** Since 1922. Formerly these theatres showed exciting serials which lasted for weeks, but now day by day the serials are going off and Indian pictures taking their place.

**Q.** I notice here for all your theatres you import 24 pictures from America.

**A.** No that is for hiring. We use those pictures in the Capitol and we have our hiring office in Bombay also.

**Q.** But you say you import 24 pictures from America yearly. Is that directly?

**A.** Yes directly.

**Q.** And you also hire out other pictures from the people who import them?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And you say here that 52 pictures every year are Indian films. What do you mean?

**A.** There are about 5 or 6 Film Companies in Bombay, and we get from them altogether 52 pictures, sometimes more, sometimes less. In the Monsoon they produce very few pictures.

**Q.** So that is the total quantity. You are not under contract with any particular company to take only their pictures?

**A.** I have a contract with nearly all film companies.

**Q.** You are not confined to any film company?

**A.** We are confined to all Indian companies.

**Q.** You deal with all?

**A.** I have to show their pictures complete. Suppose they produce 12 pictures, I have to show 12 pictures.

**Q.** How can you be under contract with all film companies?

**A.** Because I have 3 theatres.

**Q.** Altogether 52 pictures you say here. What do you mean by that?

**A.** Well, for instance the Imperial Film Company of Bombay produce 10 to 12; the Kohinoor 10 to 12, the Sharda about 8 to 10, and the Excelsior 5 or 6 pictures.

**Q.** So that you get only 52 pictures per annum from Indian producers in Bombay?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And you exhibit all here?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And other people also exhibit Indian pictures?

**A.** The Globe also has a contract with the Maharashtra, and the Poona United Film Syndicate.

**Q.** So Indian films are getting popular here?

**A.** Yes more and more popular.

**Q.** In the city portion?

**A.** Yes in the city portion.

**Q.** And you think Western films are being supplanted by Indian films?

**A.** Yes, Western serials. These pictures used to last 4 or 5 weeks, there would be a lot of excitement and thrill about them; but now the people have come to know and they want Indian pictures. I have converted my serial houses into Indian picture houses.

**Q.** So there is a growing demand for Indian pictures. Why don't you produce them here? Why don't you yourself do the production?

**A.** Climatic conditions are not so good and Bombay is nearer to historical places. In Sind specially there are not so many good places to produce pictures and it would be very costly. In Bombay they have Poona, Nasik, and other historical places which are cheaper for them to go to.

**Q.** Surely you have got historical places near by here and also good natural scenery?

**A.** Not so good as Bombay.

*Q.* Now that more Indian pictures are being produced there will be more of a market for them?

*A.* Certainly.

*Q.* And more theatres will spring up?

*A.* No, because at present I have to show the same film a second time and a third time.

*Mr. Grain:* If you could get the pictures, you would change them more frequently?

*A.* Yes. Being short of pictures I have to repeat a picture after 4 or 6 months.

*Chairman:* Even if you have to run them so often you prefer to show Indian pictures rather than Western films. Although you may have Western pictures on hand you do not think that they will attract the Indian crowd?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* You say you also control the Empire Film Company. Is that a producing company?

*A.* No, we are importing pictures from America and we have named the Company the Empire Film Company.

*Q.* I see, as importers. The pictures you import from America do you buy or hire out?

*A.* We buy them out exclusively for India, Burma and Ceylon.

*Q.* Do you buy them in block, blind booking and block booking?

*A.* No we receive press sheets.

*Q.* You select what you want and you get what you want of foreign pictures?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* You don't go in blindly?

*A.* No, there are certain film companies in America. They are called independent distributors and they send the films to us. Then there is the Metro-Goldwyn and they have their own offices. They give exclusively to one party like Madan's.

*Q.* Are you obliged to buy any pictures which you don't know?

*A.* Not we.

*Q.* Is there anyone here who buys like that in Karachi?

*A.* There is only Madan.

*Q.* And now you say in answer to question No. 3 that in smaller towns pictures with a great deal of excitement in them are more successful than dramas. Have you got any experience of smaller towns.

*A.* Yes, because the Empire Film Company hire to smaller towns.

*Q.* What are the towns you hire to?

*A.* For instance Meerut, Pindi, Hyderabad (Sind), Sukkur.

*Q.* Now you say these other things do not appeal to the smaller towns—that is, very strong love stories. Is that the difference you make in your answer to question No. 3?

*A.* The smaller towns generally contain uneducated people.

*Q.* And they do not care for strong love stories?

*A.* They cannot understand the title, while an exciting film anybody can follow.

*Q.* Such as climbing a wall, dropping from a motor car—that is what you mean; that is what appeals to the mofussil towns, not strong love stories?

*A.* Yes, because they cannot follow the love stories.

*Q.* Do you consider the Indian pictures are of fairly good quality?

*A.* Yes.

Q. As compared with Western pictures?

A. The people who go to see the Western films are quite separate.

Q. Do you get educated Indians to go to Indian pictures?

A. If it is a very good picture they do go.

Q. What sort of picture?

A. High class social and love dramas. I am now running in my Empire theatre a Kohinoor picture which is a good racing drama. They like it.

Q. What is the name of it?

A. "Moji Maja."

Q. "Pleasure Mad"?

A. Yes. I am running it to-day. Last week I had "At the Clang of Fetters".

Q. Is your theatre in the heart of the city?

A. Yes.

Q. What do you mean by theatres showing Indian pictures costing less to operate. Why?

A. Generally these pictures pay a percentage. And in Western picture houses we have to provide a big band which costs Rs. 1,000 or Rs. 1,200. Then we have to have an adequate management; while in Indian theatres no band is required. While at the Capitol I have to pay Rs. 1,200, in the Imperial I pay only Rs. 100 for a piano and tubbla. As regards gate keepers also their pay is considerably lower than in the other theatres. The rent also is much lower compared to the Western theatres.

Q. But supposing you showed Indian pictures alone here?

A. No we could not get any audience.

Q. Are there many Indians attending those theatres here.

A. Mostly the poorer classes, not high class Indians; and specially the European and Anglo-Indian population.

Q. And some domestic servants perhaps?

A. Yes.

Q. They attend these shows here?

A. Yes because they are nearer.

Q. Is there a cantonment here?

A. Yes, Napier Barracks.

Q. Are there any theatres which the cantonment people patronise?

A. Yes, it is 15 minutes walk from here to the Napier Barracks.

Q. Therefore British and Indian troops are adequately served?

A. No Indian troops go to these theatres, only British troops and they are all right.

Q. They are satisfied?

A. Yes.

Q. You have heard no complaint that they are not adequately served?

A. Nothing.

Q. Now which are cheaper, the Indian films or the foreign films?

A. It depends upon the standard of the picture.

Q. What is the lowest price for which you can get a foreign film?

A. About 300 dollars for say a fairly good picture to be distributed throughout India, Burma and Ceylon; our own copy.

Mr. Green: 300 dollars c.i.f. price?

A. Plus duty.

Q. You have to add the duty?

A. Yes. The length is 5,500 feet.



*Chairman:* For 300 dollars you can get a fairly good picture?

A. About Rs. 1,100 with duty and publicity charges added, which brings it up to Rs. 1,400 to Rs. 1,500.

Q. All included? Now what does an Indian picture cost you? What does it cost you to get the film?

A. If it is a good picture I can rent Rs. 1,500 a week.

Q. You give a certain proportion of it?

A. Generally in big cities they don't hire out but take a percentage. Bombay, Ahmedabad, Surat.

Q. It is more the attendant cost of exhibiting Western pictures that make it more costly. As you mention, you have to have a bigger band and this and the other. It is more the ancillary cost that adds to the expense? Now you are for encouraging the Indian film industry?

A. Yes.

Q. But do you think if you reduce the import duty on foreign films that would encourage the Indian industry?

A. But the Indian industry is not so big that it can yet suffice for about 400 theatres.

Q. But you want to encourage the production of more films.

A. But it will take some time. It cannot be done in a year or two. Indian film companies can hardly satisfy about 20 or 30 theatres in the big cities.

Q. But if you want to increase the production, you must have some encouragement?

A. Yes, but a few Indian pictures will not be sufficient.

Q. Supposing it is 10 per cent., two years hence it will be 15 per cent., five years hence it will be a little more, and so you would advocate a gradual increase in order to allow for the growth of the Indian industry?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think that Indian pictures will ever become popular with the European public here?

A. I am an exhibitor of English pictures, and I can say that the European public here do not even care to see such pictures. They only like comedies and so on. I have many a time tried to show British pictures, but they are not appreciated by the European public, I have failed to catch the audience.

Q. Do you want to abolish the entertainment tax altogether?

A. You must take it out from the lower classes if possible, that is, from people paying 4 annas, 8 annas or 12 annas. I would limit it up to 12 annas.

Q. We were told this morning that the public did not pay the entertainment tax?

A. We cinema people pay it, but it must be levied on the public.

Q. You tried to put it on the public but the audience fell and so you had to take it out and pay it yourself?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you any objection to give us your figures about collections, what tax you pay on your theatres and how much you collect? We should like to have figures for the last six months?

A. The account is kept by another partner. If you desire it, I can submit the accounts to-morrow showing how much I receive from each class of visitors. I think Mr. Cumming is going to give evidence here. He has got the record of all the cinemas and regular books are kept by him.

Q. If you say that the entertainment tax is oppressive on you, you have to prove it by figures, and so if you can give us figures for three months,

say for the months of July, August and September, it will be of great advantage to the Committee?

A. Yes.

Q. Now, I am interested in your answer where you say that one big firm in India is now controlling a large number of theatres and consequently the trade is not free and so on. Will you please explain how it affects you?

A. Madan Theatres, who have got the monopoly, generally block the other pictures, and nobody can import good pictures direct from America. Madans won't supply the best pictures (of which they have a monopoly) to others, because they want to show those pictures in their own theatres. We cannot import the pictures which Madans get, because they have got some rights with the producers in America, and since they have a bigger circuit than anybody else in India, they enjoy the monopoly in these pictures.

Q. In Bombay we were told that Madan's monopoly did not affect the other exhibitors or importers, and that the importers there had no difficulty in getting pictures from America?

A. In Bombay nearly all the theatres are controlled by Madans.

Q. No, that is not so. We have inquired into the matter, and it is not so?

A. All the theatres which show western films are controlled by Madans. Only a few months ago the Universal people have begun to show American pictures.

Mr. Green: And the Wellington?

A. It is also controlled by Madans. Only three months ago the Universal Pictures people have opened their branch in Bombay.

Chairman: Do you feel any difficulty in Karachi?

A. I have got a contract with the Universal and Pathe, and I don't feel any difficulty.

Q. Do the others also find difficulty just as you do?

A. If a man buys a picture from America, he cannot show it in Bombay or Calcutta because almost all the theatres are controlled by Madans.

Q. Do you think it is harmful to the public if only one firm controls the theatres?

A. Yes.

Q. Supposing a man is enterprising enough to get all the theatres, would you object to it? Would you suggest that any steps should be taken to stop it?

A. I can't suggest anything, because if a man has got the money he will do it, how can anybody stop such sort of monopoly?

Q. Is there any public danger in that?

A. Suppose he has got all ordinary pictures, then the public will be compelled to see such pictures though they may not like to see them. I mean there is not that freedom to give healthy entertainment to the public.

Q. Would you advocate any restraint on such monopoly? Supposing a law is passed that one man should not have more than 33 per cent. of the theatres in a place, would you as a trader approve of it?

A. Yes.

Q. But in no other business is such restraint imposed. Because you complain of such monopoly I want to go into it a little more deeply.

A. I had to answer that question in that manner because the question was such, and not because I felt it that way.

Q. Do you think that Censor Boards should be opened in Karachi, Lahore and Delhi?

A. There should be one Inspector appointed, and in addition there should be honorary Censor Boards.

Q. Are you thinking of Indian films or English films? All films have to come through ports?

A. Yes, but most of our supplies come from Bombay, but in Karachi also we import direct.

Q. But a certificate given in Karachi will hold good only for Karachi?

A. A temporary certificate may be given for Karachi, and a pucca certificate might be got from Bombay.

Q. How many days would you gain thereby?

A. If I receive a picture to-day, it will take about a fortnight or a month to get it passed from Bombay.

Q. How many thousand feet films are imported direct to Karachi?

A. We get about 52 pictures direct to Karachi in a year.

Q. I suppose the other places you mention get the films either through Karachi or Bombay?

A. But Lahore people will experience the same difficulty we would feel.

Q. Don't you think it will be inconvenient to have a censor at every place?

A. If the Central Board were located in Delhi, I don't think the Punjab people would have any difficulty.

Q. Why should not such pictures be censored in Bombay which is the chief port of import?

A. It takes a good deal of time in regard to topicals particularly. Suppose there is a topical here, I shall not be able to show it here unless I send it to Bombay and get it passed by them, but by that time the topical would lose its value, because others will take that topical and show it in their own cinema in Bombay.

Q. You will have to pay twice over, is it not?

A. The Censor's certificate will be sent to Bombay. If once the Government Inspector has certified a picture and passed it for the time being, it can be sent to Bombay and their certificate can be got later on.

Q. That means you will have to pay here for getting a temporary certificate and again pay for it for getting a pucca certificate from Bombay?

A. Until we get a certificate from Bombay, the certificate given by the Government Inspector should be held valid for say a month or so. We will produce in Bombay the certificate given by the Inspector in Karachi and get their certificate.

Mr. Green: Are the Bombay Board of Censors going to pass the film on the certificate of somebody else?

Chairman: Will it not increase your expenditure?

A. Before the Censor Board was established in Bombay, nobody got pictures direct in Karachi.

Q. What do you mean by saying that the system of block booking exists in India? Is it for Indian pictures or foreign pictures?

A. For both.

Q. Have you got block booking for Indian pictures?

A. We have to show all the pictures.

Q. Are you not under a contract to show every picture produced by a particular producing company in a certain period?

A. Yes, because the Indian companies have copied their contract system from American companies. We enter into a contract with American companies, particularly the Universal Pictures Corporation who have a branch in Bombay. It is run by Rao Sahib Chunilal Munim. We cannot select what we want. I have to book 52 pictures in a year under our contract, and we have to take all the pictures that they send us, whether they are appreciated here or not. They will send us what they like, and we have no choice in the matter.

**Q** Who sends you the pictures?

**A.** The Bombay people select the pictures. The American company sends several pictures to the Universal people, and these people after showing the pictures in several theatres in Bombay pass those films on to us in Karachi.

**Q.** Have you been compelled to show any bad picture which did not draw an audience? Did you suffer by it?

**A.** We have suffered often because whenever they send us Cowboy dramas they don't appeal to the educated classes here. Some times therefore we rent those pictures to some other theatres or we pay for them without showing them in our theatres.

**Q.** Did you point out that you suffer by such procedure and did you ask for a modification of the system?

**A.** Yes, but they won't do anything because there are other exhibitors who are willing to abide by their conditions, and if I press the matter too much I shall lose the contract.

**Q.** Do you think it operates as a hardship on the exhibitor?

**A.** Yes, but the Universal Co.'s rates are quite reasonable, and they are not troublesome. If we lose on one picture, we make up the loss on another. They are also very considerate people.

**Q.** In answer to question No. 22, you told us that British pictures did not draw large audiences. Are they more costly than American films?

**A.** Yes. We can get an American film for 300 dollars, while a British picture costs about £150, and it is not quite so good as an American picture from our point of view. I mean it won't draw such large audiences as the American picture will do. American pictures are sent all over the world, while the British pictures are sent to very few countries.

**Q.** With regard to your answer to part (c) of question No. 22, do you mean to say that the moral tone of the American pictures is not good?

**A.** There are three classes of pictures, comedies dramas, serials and massive productions; sometimes the moral tone of the comedy drama may not be good.

**Q.** Have you any reason to complain about the censorship either way?

**A.** No.

**Q.** What is this "Vir Durgadas"? Was it a religious picture?

**A.** Yes, it was a conflict between Hindus and Muhammedans. Durgadas was shown as beating Muhammedans, and it was stopped here by the City Magistrate.

**Q.** When was it done?

**A.** About four years back.

**Q.** Why do you want an All-India Board?

**A.** Just like the Bombay Board, there must be one All-India Board, and each place may have an Inspector as at Karachi.

**Q.** Then you mean that you want paid inspectors at every place and they should obtain a proper certificate from the Central Board?

**A.** The officer who issues the temporary certificate is as much responsible as the officers of the Central Board.

**Q.** How is the Central Board to see whether the film, examined by the Inspector and for which he gives a temporary certificate, is objectionable or not? You want the actual inspection to be made by a paid man but the certificate to be given by somebody else who have not seen the film?

**A.** We don't mind if there is a Central Board in Karachi.

**Q.** What is the object of an All-India Board?

**A.** Bombay will be nearer to all places. What I mean is, there should be Inspectors in every place like Delhi, Karachi, Lahore, etc., and there should be one Central Board in Delhi. That is my object.

*Mr. Green :* In answer to No. 13, you say that the duty at present charged is 30 per cent. on a valuation of 4 annas a foot?

*A.* I say it should be 15 per cent., it is a mistake.

*Q.* You suggest that it is not fair to charge duplicate copies of a film at the same rate. How would it be possible for the customs people to know that a copy had been imported before?

*A.* On the triplicate Bill of Entry they might make a note of it.

*Q.* Suppose it was imported at both Bombay and Karachi?

*A.* Anyhow the censor's certificate will have to be produced. If a man says that a copy had been imported before, he will have to produce the Censor's certificate first.

*Q.* You say the duty is too high, but you say that you could get films from America for 300 dollars which represents Rs. 1,000 and the length of these films will be about 6,000 ft. and the duty on the thousand ft. would come to Rs. 37-8-0?

*A.* For a reel it will come to Rs. 37-8-0, and for 6,000 ft. it will come to about Rs. 200 and odd.

*Q.* That is to say, you pay a little over Rs. 200, and about 20 per cent. duty. Do you give any share in your takings to the people from whom you import these films?

*A.* No, never.

*Q.* I suppose this 300-dollar film represents a fair value of all classes of films?

*A.* Some pictures cost Rs. 15,000, but I am talking of the ordinary pictures, which are good for Wednesday shows. But they take out the Royalty.

*Q.* But Royalty is part of the real value. Is it not sometimes very difficult for the customs officials to know what the Royalty actually is?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* On the question of censorship, you suggest a paid inspector in Karachi. You also told us that you get about 52 films direct in Karachi, and if they average 6,000 ft. the total will be over 300,000 ft. and the censor's income at Rs. 5 a thousand feet will come to about Rs. 1,500 a year?

*A.* Yes, you may appoint in Karachi some official who can do this work in spare time. He may be paid something extra for his additional duties. He will have to work for, say, two hours a day every Tuesday. We may receive two pictures in a month. I think a part time official will be quite sufficient for Karachi.

*Q.* The Chairman pointed out that the Bombay Board or the Central Board could hardly pass a film without seeing it themselves merely on the report of a part time official in Karachi. Would you be prepared to pay another Rs. 5 a thousand feet and get a permanent certificate which may be valid all over India?

*A.* Again I shall have to send the picture to Bombay, and that is a difficulty.

*Q.* Would it be of any use if you get a certificate which will be valid in Karachi only?

*A.* I am an exhibitor. I can show it in Karachi only, and nobody else has got a theatre. In Sind there are only three cities which have got theatres. Everybody wants to give pictures on the southern side. On the Northern side up to Lahore there are very few theatres which will pay a film hirer.

*Q.* Do I understand you to say that you don't send pictures to any other part of India?

*A.* Yes, we are sending.

*Q.* Then you need an All-India certificate?

*A.* Yes, including Burma and Ceylon.

**Q.** You suggest that an All-India Board should be constituted and that it should have three nominees from Government, one from the police, one from the Health Department and one from the State. What do you mean by that?

**A.** I mean any Government official.

**Q.** You also suggest that the exhibitors, distributors and producers should be represented on the Board. Will not there be a risk that a man would be a judge in his own case?

**A.** Because at present most of the members do not know what the cinema is, in fact some people may not be seeing the cinema shows and they do not know what the cinema line is. But if you say that in some cases a member may have to be the judge of his own case, I must point out that he will not be the only member sitting on the Board, and there will be other members also sitting on it who will have to judge. That particular member alone will not pass judgment on a film concerning him. There will be a committee of 9 members all of whom will examine the film.

**Q.** You don't want members of the All-India Board to see films then? All their work is to be done by inspectors?

**A.** I think so.

**Q.** Have you considered the financial situation, that is to say, how you could appoint inspectors of sufficient ability at all these different places without raising the fees for censorship?

**A.** But any official might do it as a side duty, if he is an experienced officer, he can do that—it won't be so expensive.

**Q.** In Bombay for example there is already 3½ hours work a day and it is increasing.

**A.** That is because there are so many companies in Bombay.

**Q.** You could hardly expect a government officer to add 3½ hours work a day to his other duties, if he is already occupied?

**A.** In Karachi it should not be difficult.

*Colonel Crawford:* What do you mean by "I also control the Empire Film Company." What is the Empire Film Company? You mean as a distributor?

**A.** Yes. Evidence is going to be given to-morrow by the Empire Company.

**Q.** Are you of opinion that the cinema audiences are growing, that the Indian peoples are taking to the cinema? Are the Indian masses more and more every year taking to going and seeing the cinema?

**A.** The Indian masses go more to Indian theatres.

**Q.** Quite. It is getting more popular.

**A.** Yes, there is growth.

**Q.** Does that apply to the mofussil too? Or is that only in towns so far?

**A.** In big towns only.

**Q.** You get this growth only in the big towns.

**A.** And it will gradually spread to the smaller towns.

**Q.** Have you ever considered the possibility of extending your circuit of theatres, of erecting theatres in the smaller towns?

**A.** We are thinking of it.

**Q.** In order to make a market for your own imports, you say the popular film and the film for which there is a great future is the Indian film?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You say that to-day Indian producers cannot supply you with all you want. Therefore, I gather you would be against enforcing a quota system. That is to say you would be against a company being compelled to show a certain percentage of Indian films in any of your theatres? Do you know what the quota system is?

A. No.

Q. Oh well I won't trouble with that question. Do you consider the standard of the Indian films satisfies you as exhibited?

A. Yes.

Q. Its technique is good enough?

A. It is good enough for the Indian.

Q. Have you any criticism to make of the type of story they are showing?

A. So far none.

Q. You think the type of story they are showing is what your audience want?

A. Yes.

Q. Do comic western films go down? Are they still in demand with Indian audiences?

A. Yes, they are becoming more popular with the educated Indian.

Q. There is no production by the Indian producers of comics?

A. There have been, but they were failures.

Q. Regarding the merits of your pictures, how do you get an opportunity of seeing what picture to buy?

A. We generally see the receipt as well as the commercial book. We go by the popularity of the actors or actresses.

Q. You judge very largely by the popularity of the picture in the home market. You don't want to see the whole picture before you import?

A. We cannot see it here. We have to import from America.

Q. You could have an agent in America who could secure your requirements?

A. It won't pay us.

Q. You suggested that if there is a monopoly in the exhibition line it would have a very definite injurious effect on the public?

A. Yes.

Q. That is your considered opinion?

A. Yes. Because that company can show whatever pictures they like, whether they are good or bad. They will put the pictures in the theatre and the public will have to see them.

Q. Well, you recommend that competition is the best way of raising the standard of the pictures—open competition?

A. Yes.

Q. And I notice you favour free trade in the cinema market?

A. Yes.

Q. Keeping the market open for everybody.

A. For every country.

Q. Now I was interested over this question of the censorship which Mr. Green asked you. Is there any reason why you should not import your films through Bombay? You buy films from America. Why can't you have them imported from Bombay and send them on to Karachi? Is there much delay?

A. The steamer is coming to Karachi and the bills have to be paid in Karachi.

Q. Yes, but the number of ships coming to Karachi are not many. There are no regular steamers?

A. Yes, every third week there is a steamer from America.

Q. So you might have to wait three weeks before you get your film?

A. No, it will come by the same steamer from America.

Q. You think it would cause delay if you imported through Bombay?

A. Some steamers reach Karachi even before the English steamers deliver the pictures to us.

Q. But once you knew you were always importing through Bombay you could always make your own arrangements?

A. And again we haven't got a man there.

Q. But I thought you had an office in Bombay?

A. Yes for general purposes. But supposing there was another company.

Q. I was trying to find out if there is any serious difficulty or whether you could bring them in through Bombay without much trouble?

A. We could. But suppose there is another party who only wants one picture, he would have to go to Bombay and find out and have it passed. We have as many as 26 imported yearly. But there is a man who imports three pictures: he would have to go himself and have it passed.

Q. And you would like to be there personally for the purpose?

A. Yes, because that man may not have any influence, bringing only 3 pictures.

Q. When you have the picture censored, would you personally like to be present at the censorship?

A. Of course.

Mr. Neogy: There are three theatres, the Capitol, the Palace, and the Crown which show exclusively foreign pictures and you own one of them—the Capitol?

A. Yes.

Q. Would you be prepared to agree to an arrangement under which you would be compelled to show in the Capitol 10 or 12 or 15 per cent. of Indian pictures?

A. No, I cannot show them.

Q. Why not?

A. Because I shall have to keep my theatre empty. Nobody would come there. It is quite a different locality. The Capitol requires quite a different audience from the Indian public. Most of these are in the city and these masses will never come to the Capitol. They have got their own theatres in the city.

Q. What about your usual audience. Would they never agree to see your Indian pictures?

A. That is composed of educated Indians as well as Europeans and Anglo-Indians. They would never agree to see Indian pictures.

Q. Why? Have you ever tried it?

A. I may mention that even the English pictures that I showed recently did not appeal to my audience as much as the American films.

Q. Do you think that if the technical quality were to improve, it would make any difference?

A. Perhaps Indians may come. But Europeans and Anglo-Indians will never come.

Q. So it is no question of quality with them? They don't want Indian subjects at all?

A. No.

Q. How is it then in reply to 22 you say that India's participation in the Imperial Conference resolution would perhaps assist the cinema producing industry because in that case Indian films would be shown in England?

A. In the same way.

Q. How? If the Europeans living here don't agree to see an Indian picture, whatever its quality, how are you sure that the Europeans living abroad would agree to see an Indian picture?

A. If it is forced here in India it may be forced in England too.



Q. Oh, you are thinking of pictures being forced? I thought you were opposed to force. You yourself don't believe in it unless it is forced on us?

A. In the same way as our Indian pictures also ought to be forced on other countries.

Q. You are not prepared to accept that for your part?

A. No.

Q. Now you said that good films are readily obtainable at a reasonable price. That is what you say in reply to question 9. If that be so, how can you support your statement that the fact that there is a tendency towards monopoly has been hampering you?

A. There are good pictures.

Q. You say good pictures are readily obtainable at a reasonable price. If that be so, what can be the complaint of the trade against anybody, say for instance owning 50 or 60 or 100 cinemas, here?

A. I won't say a good many. Madans have got a few, I have got a few. I can select from these. Suppose I find any bad picture, I will get another from the Universal.

Q. The fact that Madans control a large number of theatres gives them a comparatively advantageous position?

A. Yes.

Q. Now, you control 4 theatres and you are also an importer. Does not that give you a greater advantage in the market than a man who for instance owns only one theatre?

A. Yes, he has got a contract with some company.

Q. Quite right. So you are in a more advantageous position than a man owning one theatre.

Now the very fact that a particular exhibitor who owns a theatre is also an importer places him in a certain advantageous position again?

A. Yes.

Q. Would you be prepared to support a measure that would make any such combination illegal? That is to say, a man who is an importer or distributor shall not be able to own any theatre in the country. One man, one theatre. And the man who imports or distributes must not own any theatre?

A. Yes. That would be an ideal condition of things.

Q. Now at one time there was some sort of blind booking in your experience and you yourself have to resort to it. You have got to take a lot of pictures all together. In reply to one of the questions you said that you generally import 24 pictures from America. Do these 24 constitute a block like that?

A. No.

Q. Then you are thinking perhaps of the pictures that you take from the Universal Pictures Corporation and which you yourself don't directly import. There is a block system only with the Universal?

A. Pathés also.

Q. Have you much experience of Pathés in the matter?

A. I only entered into a contract with them last year.

Q. It was a blind booking?

A. No.

Q. You had your selection?

A. Yes. But Pathés are a kind of national and new concern and they are giving facilities for the time being until they have established the business.

Q. Now you say the fact that Madans own a large number of theatres enables them not only to show the good pictures but also the bad ones. Have you come across many bad pictures that Madans have shown?

A. People come here and tell me about them. I practically don't go to that theatre now. I hear from the audience. They may say: last week's picture there was not good, that is why we have come to you.

Q. And your pictures are uniformly good?

A. Not always.

Q. In so far as you go in for blind booking they cannot be always good. You have no means of ascertaining the qualities of each particular picture in your dealings with the Universal, for instance?

A. Generally the company tries to produce good pictures.

Q. Yes, but it depends on them and not on you. It is a question of luck more or less?

A. Yes.

**Written Statement of the Karachi Indian Merchants' Association,  
dated the 19th November 1927.**

1. No.

2. About 80 per cent. of the educated and 50 per cent. of the uneducated classes. In the town area the visitors are mostly Hindus, and Muslims. In Camp, the visitors are mostly Europeans, Parsis, Christians and non-Indians.

(a) About 50 per cent. visitors are mostly adolescents of impressionable temperament though not of impressionable "age."

3. Films depicting Indian life are popular with Indians and sensational films with heaps of rough work and stunts are popular with uneducated classes.

4. No. Because there is lack of a cinema industry in India with sufficient financial equipment and organisation and absence of efficient directors and trained actors.

5. Yes.

(a) Fairly good.

(b) Yes.

(c) Generally it is more profitable to show an Indian film to an Indian audience and a Western film to a Western audience. For instance, films based upon English novels or dramas are popular with non-Indians or even some English educated Indians. Films depicting Ramayan, Mahabharat or some chapters from these are popular with Hindu audiences.

6. Yes, decidedly.

(b) (1) Topical, modern society films, historical films and educative films. (2) National and *puranic* episodes or less heavily planned social, sports, folklore and humorous films for the rest.

12. It is not.

14. Yes, it would and such use of the cinema is a very great national necessity. Cinema can be a very great and popular agency for public education specially among the illiterate who can be educated through pictures very much more quickly and effectively than through lectures.

There ought to be a very great demand for such films.

15. Yes. The Industry could attract a number of unemployed who have a genius for acting for exhibition. In India actors could be had very much cheaper than anywhere else, and generally equipment, travelling, etc., would cost less than in America or England or other European countries.

16. At present technical skill is greatly lacking, but it is bound to develop if the industry proves paying.

17. Capital can be produced, but it is shy of coming into the field because the prospects have not been known and efficient directorate and enterprise in the line are lacking.

18. Yes. We would suggest the entertainment tax on Indian produced films to be reduced to half and materials for production of films to be free from customs duty.

21. We do not favour a state agency for film distribution or censorship. We favour, however, censorship and other control by a popularly elected committee representing the legislature, local bodies and the education department. A state monopoly will not succeed as a business enterprise.

22. No. No kind of preference will help the Indian film industry.

(b) There are other better methods of achieving the object stated than by adopting preference.

23. If the Indian National Congress or any other similar representative body could be induced to agree, a representative board on their behalf could select certain Indian produced films for exhibition in various parts of the Empire, their use being lent free of charge. Similarly, other countries in the Empire could send to India films produced by them for exhibition in India. Such films would make the circulation of misrepresentation of Indian life impossible, as has been done by several writers on India and its people.

24. (a) Sensational or sensuous films sometimes produce high excitement in the individual leading to crime.

(b) Yes.

(d) (1) No.

(2) No.

(e) We feel there has been some increase in crime of a daring nature. At least, new ways of committing crimes have been introduced in India.

(f) No personal knowledge.

25. Yes.

26. (a) Yes.

29. Yes.

30. Children below 9 years may only be permitted to see films on educational, historical, health and religious topics and prohibited from others. Boys between 9 and 16 may be given a greater latitude, but they should not be allowed to see very sensational films of the rough type or of "sex" nature.

31. Yes. Provided a Board of Censors consists of such persons who are competent to censor a film.

33. Censorship should not be generally strict except in the production of sensuous films.

34. No. Provincial Boards are very necessary. The Central Board should continue but it should consist of elected representatives from the central legislatures.

35. No. The Provincial Boards should have a paid censor as Secretary to it, and the Board should be more representative.

37. Yes.

42. Yes. The Trade might be represented on the Provincial and Central Boards.

44. They can considerably raise the standard by reasoned criticism from time to time.

45. (a) State control should, as far as possible, be avoided.

(b) Yes.

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**Oral Evidence of Messrs. R. K. SIDHWA and N. D. MALIK, Representatives of the Karachi Indian Merchants' Association, and the Karachi Health Association, on Monday, the 21st November 1927.**

**Mr. Sidhwa:** I am coming on behalf of the Karachi Indian Merchants' Association and also on behalf of the Karachi Health Association. **Mr. Malik and myself** represent the Karachi Indian Merchants' Association.

*Mr. Malik* : I am a member of the Association; that is, the firm of Messrs. N. D. Malik & Sons is a member of the Indian Merchants' Association.

*Mr. Sidhwa* : I am a member of the Indian Merchants' Association and Secretary of the Karachi Health Association.

*Chairman* : This is a reply sent to us by the Indian Merchants' Association?

*Mr. Sidhwa* : On behalf of that Association; both of us drafted it.

*Q.* What is the membership of the Indian Merchants' Association?

*Mr. Sidhwa* : 185. \*I have not brought the annual report, but I will send you a copy.

*Q.* It consists of firms and individuals?

*A.* Mostly firms.

*Q.* How long has it been in existence?

*A.* For about 26 years.

*Q.* Both of you are in the habit of going to the cinema very often?

*A.* Not very often. I do not frequently visit the cinema.

*Mr. Malik* : I go occasionally.

*Q.* Was this representation which has been sent by the Indian Merchants' Association placed before a Committee?

*A.* The Commissioner's letter was placed before our Managing Committee. The Managing Committee elected both of us to draft the reply and submit it. They left everything to us.

*Q.* You consider the use of the cinema for at least educational and propaganda purposes a matter of necessity?

*Mr. Sidhwa* : Yes.

*Q.* And as an amusement for the poor what is your view as merchants?

*A.* For amusement to the poor topical films would be to a certain extent desirable.

*Q.* Do you consider it a necessity or a luxury?

*A.* To an extent it is necessary.

*Q.* I put you that question in order to see whether you consider that public funds should be utilised for improving or putting it on a good basis?

*A.* What I would state is for education, and health it is really desirable that some amusement films ought to be there.

*Q.* Do you consider then that public funds should be utilised for developing this industry?

*A.* Provided, of course, education and health films go side by side.

*Q.* That is what I mean. Now do you think that educational and public health films will be properly produced or effectively produced if left to private agency?

*A.* They may not.

*Q.* Would you advocate the Government establishing a studio or studios for producing such sort of films?

*A.* Nothing like it I should say.

*Q.* You think that it is essential that such films should be produced?

*A.* Yes. Educational and films of that sort should be produced.

*Q.* Do you also believe in the development of the Indian film industry?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Do you think anything is needed to encourage its growth?

*A.* Government . . .

*Q.* Government means the public?

*A.* Yes. I know that.

*Q.* Do you think public effort should be made to establish that industry in the country?

*A.* Yes, it will certainly be desirable.

*Q.* But do you consider it necessary? Desirability is one thing and necessity is another. What is your view?

*A.* I would advocate it in the interests of the country

*Q.* As a necessity?

*A.* Yes, I would think so.

*Q.* You think the Indian films are becoming more and more popular with the people?

*A.* Yes, certainly.

*Q.* Do you think there is any chance of the public in Sind going in for the film industry?

*Mr. Malik:* Yes.

*Q.* Private individuals I mean?

*Mr. Sidhwa:* They may, but in the present condition of the financial situation it may not.

*Q.* Whose financial situation?

*Mr. Malik:* Of private individuals. At the present juncture it may not be possible owing to the depressed state of the finances generally.

*Q.* That can only be temporary. Have they shown any taste for establishing any producing industry here in your province?

*A.* I do not think so.

*Q.* But I suppose the films produced in Bombay are attractive?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* They are now becoming more and more popular in the theatres in this city?

*Mr. Sidhwa:* Considering the population of Karachi there are something like 9 cinemas here.

*Q.* It is a pretty large number?

*Mr. Malik:* A very large number.

*Q.* Do you know that Mussalmans resort to the theatres in large numbers? What is the percentage of population here . . . .

*Mr. Sidhwa:* Half and half Hindus and Mussalmans; the Hindus are slightly more, say 4 or 5 per cent. more.

*Q.* To which cinema do you go?

*Mr. Malik:* I go to the Capitol, the Palace Theatre, the Imperial. I go to different cinemas off and on, not to any particular one. There are 3 or 4 cinemas which have been lately started and they are not up to the mark.

*Q.* What do you mean by that?

*A.* They do not exhibit good films. The films shown there are not as satisfactory as those shown in others.

*Q.* Do the educated people go to the Indian pictures?

*Mr. Sidhwa:* Yes, they prefer to go there.

*Q.* We were told that the educated classes do not like the present sort of Indian films which are exhibited?

*A.* No. I should not think so.

*Q.* Is it your experience that they do go?

*A.* You mean Indian films made in Bombay?

*Q.* Yes.

*A.* They attract large audiences.

Q. From the educated classes?

A. Yes.

Mr. Malik: Some of the Indian films shown on Satnarayan fasting day—educated people do not generally prefer to go to those films.

Q. Those who have adapted Western manners?

A. Yes.

Q. Those who are up to date?

A. Yes.

Q. They do not favour these Indian films?

A. No.

Q. But ordinarily men like you—you have not become westernised?

A. I am afraid I have kept pace with the moving times.

Q. Take people like pleaders, educated merchants and so on?

A. Pleaders do not go not because they do not like the film but generally because they do not want to touch their purse. If they can go free, they will go.

Q. You said the audience was growing in numbers and all that. Who are the people then who patronise these films?

A. Labouring classes.

Q. They go in large numbers to these?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you got any educational films now shown anywhere here in Sind?

Mr. Sidhu: Not at all, but I may say that when they were observing the Baby Week we got from Bombay the Provincial Health Week films and we showed them. But it has been found very difficult to prevail upon the cinema companies to show these because they complain they do not get an audience, and when we told them to show them free of charge and also that we would pay them, they said, "The audience actually goes away if we exhibit these films." Therefore I say it should be made compulsory that such films along with certain amusements should be shown.

Q. Short length propaganda films should be compulsorily exhibited?

A. Yes. From my experience I have found that it is difficult for an audience to gather for such films, and secondly the companies do not advocate them because they say it is not to the taste of the audience.

Q. Would you also for the same reason compel every cinema theatre to show Indian films in some portion of their exhibition?

A. Yes, historic and such other films.

Q. Every theatre?

A. Not necessarily all theatres, but I think it would be better . .

Q. But why? What is the object?

A. For educational purposes.

Q. I mean, in order to encourage the growth of Indian film industry would you advocate compelling every cinema theatre to show some Indian film?

A. I would not compel them, but as regards these educational, health films, I would compel them. That should be one of the principal aims of this Committee.

Q. You say capital is not forthcoming for this industry? You say it is shy?

A. Yes.

Q. Because the prospects are not bright?

A. Yes.

Q. If that is so, how are you going to induce capital to come unless you find a market for the products?

A. If it is given a trial . .

Q. What trial?

A. That it is worth while.

Q. By subsidy you mean?

A. I am not in favour of subsidy by Government. I say, put indirect or direct taxation on the importation of foreign films.

Q. You want to increase the cost of foreign films?

A. Yes, and give advantage thereby to the Indian films.

Q. You want to increase the import duty on foreign films?

A. Yes.

Q. And also reduce the duty on raw materials for the industry?

A. Yes.

Q. Those are the two things you advocate?

A. Yes.

Q. You do not advocate this quota system?

A. No.

Q. You understand what is meant by the quota system?

A. Yes, I have read about it.

Q. In answer to question No. 22, you say you are opposed to preference being shown because it would not help the Indian film industry.

A. There should not be subsidy I said.

Q. Question No. 22 refers to the resolution of the Imperial Conference and you say no kind of preference will help the Indian film industry. Your answer is very short. What is your idea? If preference were shown to another part of the British Empire you think it would not be helpful to the Indian industry?

A. That is what I think. I would not like to give any sort of preference.

Q. You do not like it because it would be harmful to the Indian film industry, that is your point of view?

A. Yes.

Q. What do you mean by saying, "there are other better methods of achieving the object."

Mr. Neogy: That is in reply to clause (b).

Chairman: You mean those objects can be achieved without adopting Imperial preference, by some sort of arrangement or co-operation?

A. Yes.

Q. You say, "If the Indian National Congress or any other similar representative body could be induced to agree, a representative board on their behalf could select certain Indian produced films for exhibition in various parts of the Empire"?

A. It will be better if you have a proper representative body to advise on the selection of films.

Q. So far as Indian films, which are exhibited abroad, are concerned, you think a representative body should be made to agree to what sort of film should be selected?

A. Yes.

Q. Would you leave it to a body elected by the Central Legislature instead of the Indian National Congress?

A. I would not mind, but the National Congress represents the people in the true sense to a great extent and it should have a voice in it. You know very well how propaganda against India is being carried on in foreign countries, take, for instance, Miss Mayo's book. Nobody on behalf of Government has taken any steps to contradict what Miss Mayo stated. It would have been desirable if it were done.

Q. The Indian National Congress may do this without being told?

A. Quite so. They will do it, but I say . . .

Q. We are not here to advise the Indian National Congress, they will resent it? Supposing you had a body elected from the Central Legislature?

A. To a purely elected body I have no objection.

Mr. Malik. The point seems to be this. There should be a proper kind of censorship, so that any Indian films going abroad may be censored . .

Q. You say that every film sent abroad, should be seen by a representative body before it is sent out?

A. Yes, by a proper representative body.

Q. You would advocate control for films produced in India and taken abroad?

A. Yes. Similarly in the case of Western films to be shown in India.

Q. I will come to that. What is your opinion about the general effect of the cinema on the public as regards morals? Do you think the cinema has got a demoralising effect?

Mr. Sidhwa : As I told you, certain types of sensational films have.

Q. Do you think the cinema has had a bad effect on the Indian mind?

A. Certain types of films have had decidedly. I do not say all the films, but certain classes of films have in my opinion increased the number of crimes.

Q. Do you think more crimes are committed owing to the cinema?

A. Yes, I do feel that.

Q. Is that the general feeling in your community here?

A. That is the general feeling of people. At times when thefts are committed of a very peculiar nature, they attribute them to the influence of cinema shows.

Q. What sort of thefts?

A. Not ordinary thefts, but thefts requiring extraordinary skill.

Mr. Coatman : Showing new tricks and so on?

A. Yes.

Mr. Malik : One occurred in Karachi. A schoolboy in a Mission School robbed some one of a few rupees. He had his feet covered with a bit of gunny bag so as not to leave any print there. When he was caught and brought before the Court he was asked where he got the idea from? He said that he got it from the cinema.

Mr. Coatman : Do you know that from your personal knowledge?

A. The Headmaster of the school told me. Then you may have heard of the daring dacoity that occurred in Calcutta. Some years back an educated party came in a motor car, looted some shop and went back. They were chased by a gang of police. When they reached a certain place there was a wall between. They had managed to have another motor car on the other side. The police did not think of it. The dacoits climbed over the wall, went to the other side with their booty and escaped. When they were caught they were asked where they got the idea from. They said they got it from the cinema. In short new methods of committing crimes have been introduced by the cinema films.

Chairman : Is it your idea that no film based on crime should be exhibited?

Mr. Malik : I do not mean that.

Q. Then?

A. There are certain kinds of films which should be restricted to certain classes of people, people of certain age and over.

Q. These may be old men who took the idea?

A. It is not impossible.

Q. Then what is the use of classifying these films, only for adults?

A. Those who have not got experience, or who are impressionable.



Q. Those who commit motor car dacoities are not boys of impressionable age?

A. Of course, they got the impression.

Q. You can get the impression and I can get the impression?

A. But they have not got experience of what this impression will lead to.

Q. Therefore you are not for prohibiting the cinema altogether?

A. No. On the contrary I think it is the best thing for imparting education. There are different standards of morality in India. One film may be quite unobjectionable in one province but not so in another.

Q. It is all very general. What do you suggest?

A. The remedy is proper censorship, censorship entrusted to a proper kind of people. If there is a proper sort of censorship, they can very well look after their own province, because you cannot have universal censorship for the whole of India. The circumstances are so different. As you have your different legislation in different provinces,—one province prefers the age of consent, and another province does not,—similarly you cannot say the standard of morality is everywhere the same. A film may be found unobjectionable in Bombay, but we might not allow it if we had any hand in the censorship here.

Q. There is a pernicious effect of the cinema in your view so far as crime is concerned?

A. Yes, to a certain extent.

Q. I suppose you know there are rules in the Censorship Board which provide for it? Censors have to take care that in these crime films suggestive things and details as to the method of committing a crime are omitted.

A. Again, as I have told you, it comes to the question of judgment. Take the film of "Damaged Goods." I am a preacher of the gospel of health and I would very much like to have that type of films shown rather than any others but that film was first prohibited here.

Q. By whom?

A. I do not know by whom.

Q. You liked it but other people did not?

A. There are certain people who may have said, "These are not the things to be shown now-a-days." Those in authority hear them because such and such a thing comes from such and such people.

Q. You say people objected to "Damaged Goods" being shown?

A. Some objected.

Q. And that objection prevailed?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think that objection was not a good objection?

A. It was not, because those people had not studied this question from . . .

Q. They did not take a broader view of the question?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think that the cinema has got any demoralising effect on the youth of the country apart from crime?

A. Not as a whole, but so far as some films are concerned . . .

Q. You are then more for stricter censorship than it is at present?

A. No, not at the present moment. I want them to live and to enjoy, but not at the cost of morality.

Q. Everybody agrees about it, but the difficulty is to find . . .

A. The censorship Board should consist of such people, men of position . . .

Q. Let us examine your position now. Do you expect every film to be examined by the whole Board?

A. Every film to be examined if it is not based on a recognised religious book.

**Q.** In order to find out whether it is so based, one should examine the film?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Then you want the whole Board to examine each film?

**A.** Yes. You could have your Inspector and let the man bring to the notice of the Board what kind of film . . .

**Q.** You would leave the first inspection to an Inspector?

**A.** I would not. I would leave it to the Board. If the Board does not want to take so much pains to censor properly, taking into consideration that millions of people will be affected . . .

**Q.** It is not a question of millions of people being affected but you must find a method of securing what is good for them and I want to know what you think?

**A.** I would like every film to be scrutinised.

**Q.** By the whole Board?

**A.** Well, the Board may appoint some of themselves—for instance, if they constitute committees, one for health films and so on, they can examine the things easily.

**Mr. Siddons :** If a Board is appointed with men of different temperaments, they can, for instance if there is a history man he will be able to see historical films and so on.

**Q.** The history man will be concerned with historical portion only?

**A.** As it is honorary work it will be desirable that less work is entrusted to them.

**Q.** So that you must minimise the work as far as possible which is cast on the Board?

**A.** The pamphlets must be naturally there.

**Q.** Pamphlets won't tell you what the film is like?

**A.** But that will guide you.

**Q.** To the story or plot?

**A.** Then the film has to be exhibited before it is put on the screen.

**Q.** Will you be satisfied if one paid officer inspects the film?

**A.** One only inspects the film before he brings it before the Board?

**Q.** What he thinks is unobjectionable he will pass, but where he feels a doubt he will bring it before the Board?

**A.** No. I won't be satisfied. I would not give him any power to pass a film.

**Q.** Then what will be his power according to you?

**A.** He must put it before the Board.

**Q.** What has he to do?

**A.** He will have to do certain work like the secretary.

**Q.** What work do you expect the inspector to do? You want the inspection either to be done by one individual, by the Board or by a panel of the Board?

**A.** By a panel.

**Q.** So that every film must go through a panel?

**A.** And one inspector should be a paid man there as an officer for executive work, if any is required to be done.

**Q.** Then on every board you should have a history-knowing man, an educationalist, a religious man?

**A.** So that there may be less work entrusted to each honorary worker.

**Q.** Is every film to be seen by an educationalist, a historian, a religious man—is every film to be seen by such a group?

**A.** Yes.

Q. You want a combination, do you think you can get it?

Mr. Malik : You should allow the Board to co-opt members in each province if you want them. There are so many ways out of the difficulty if you want to minimise the work.

Q. Anyway that is your opinion. You have not thought about the details. Your opinion is that every film should be examined by some responsible members of the public. That is your main point?

A. Yes.

Q. It should not be left to a single individual?

A. Yes.

Q. That you think will be a remedy for the state of things that you find. There is more safety in two men's judgment than in one man's judgment?

A. Quite right.

Q. Do you advocate that the Government should establish studies for agricultural and educational purposes?

A. Yes.

Q. You are prepared, as members of the public, to support any financial commitment which may be needed in that direction. Because you are all voters I take it and as public tax-payers you are prepared to support any expenditure in that behalf?

Mr. Sidhwa : Yes, because it is in the interests of agriculture and education in India as a whole. Therefore we would not mind paying for it.

Q. In your answer to question No. 34 you say "though provincial boards are very necessary, the central board should continue." But there is no central board at present. Do I understand you to say you would like to see a Central Board in addition to the provincial boards?

A. No. I think provincial boards should be left to themselves.

Q. No central board need be instituted?

A. No. I don't think so. It will mean overlapping of work.

Q. The Chairman has asked you whether it is possible to ensure that every film is seen by a panel of members of the Board and you rather left it to us to work out the details. Have you any idea of the amount of work involved in the censorship of films?

A. Therefore I stated there should be different persons for different topics, so that the work can be considerably minimised.

Q. The danger is if you split up the work among too many people there won't be uniformity of action. There must be differences of opinion in any case. What appears to you one day unobjectionable may appear to Mr. Malik, who has not seen it or censored the film, when he sees it first on the screen, as unsuitable. Would it ever be possible to avoid such differences of opinion?

A. The point is this. If there is a responsible man on the Board the public will have confidence that the film has been properly censored. If you have such a panel as I suggest, the merchants may have sent one member, the Health Association another, the Municipality another. Then if that man does anything wrong, the municipality or whomever he represents can throw him out.

Q. You still desire, I presume, that the certificate of any such Board shall be valid throughout India?

A. I don't say throughout India.

Q. Well subject to the right of any local authority to suspend it?

A. I cannot say about India as a whole. As far as a particular province is concerned, behind the man there is some force.

Q. Would the Board of Censors at Bombay, if it was so constituted as you suggest, be responsible to the public of Karachi?

A. Therefore I say it has to be provincial.

Q. You would have a separate board for Karachi?

A. Yes, a separate board.

Q. And a separate board for Hyderabad, Sind?

A. Not necessarily.

Q. Can you suggest how those boards can be financed?

A. There should be one central board for the province of Sind and it may be co-opted. Looking to the special circumstances of Sind you may have a separate board, just as in other Government matters Sind is altogether independent.

Q. Would you agree to a separate one for Gujerat and a separate one for Maharashtra?

A. The position Gujerat and Maharashtra may be the same as Bombay and therefore it may not need a separate Board.

Colonel Crawford : Have you seen any Indian films exhibited here made in Bengal?

A. No. I have not seen such films.

Q. Are you generally against misrepresentation of facts on the films, misrepresentations of Indian life in the West, misrepresentation of religious subjects?

A. Yes.

Q. And similarly misrepresentation of any sort even of Western races in India if it occurs?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think that we must make special provision for the entertainment requirements of different classes of people? The cinema provides entertainment for the people. Some people want that form of entertainment in one type and some in another type. Can we force them all to take one type or must we consider the different requirements of different people? Let me put it to you perfectly straight. You have a certain number of Europeans and Anglo-Indians who want a particular kind of entertainment. Do you think we would be right in providing the kind of entertainment they require?

A. Yes, provided it is patronised by that class of people.

Q. There has been some sort of suggestion that we might impose a quota system with a view to encouraging the Indian film industry. Some exhibitors have told us that in certain theatres and certain cinemas patronised by this particular class of audience such films would not be a draw; they want to see a different type of film. Would you suggest that we should be justified in making such special arrangements for them?

Mr. Malik : So far as catering for all classes of people is concerned we are in favour of the idea that we should cater for all, provided the films are censored . . .

Q. I am not talking of censorship now but only of the provision of that kind of entertainment. You think we ought to see to the needs of all classes?

A. Certainly.

Q. Well then in so far as these theatres which we decide should be entitled to provide entertainment for European audiences, are concerned, you would have no objection to them showing British Empire films?

A. No. I would not have any objection provided that they have been censored properly by the Board of Censors so as to avoid misunderstanding. Now as regards misunderstanding I can give one instance. So many misunderstandings occur because those who are in the know are not consulted. A funny thing happened once. A new arrival from the West was entertained at a Native State banquet. After dinner he was served with betel leaf and nut. Naturally he declined it. Next day he wrote to the people there that Indians are in the habit of spitting blood after every meal. He asked an Indian who told him after every meal they did that. It was of course no fault of his. There is the same kind of misrepresentation for instance in the

case of "The Life of Krishna." Thousands of misunderstandings have been spread and could be spread in this way.

*Q.* Owing to ignorance of various customs. Quite. Now can you give us any idea of the type of film being shown in what I might call the mofussil of the Sind province? Are there any cinemas in the mofussil?

*Mr. Siddhu :* No there are not many. By mofussil you mean a town of about 25,000 population?

*Q.* Yes.

*A.* Well there is Larkana for instance.

*Q.* Have you seen the type of film shown there?

*A.* Several of the films exhibited here are shown there.

*Q.* We have been given to understand that quite a different type of film goes out to the mofussil; a type that would not draw an audience at Karachi or Bombay might be bought specially to show in the mofussil?

*A.* My information is that . . . .

*Q.* You have no personal knowledge?

*A.* No. I have no personal knowledge.

*Q.* And would you say from your knowledge of your own province that films you might quite well show in a cosmopolitan town like Bombay or Karachi might not be suitable to be shown in the districts?

*A.* Some possibly.

*Q.* I am just wondering whether we have to make any particular recommendation for our mofussil audiences or not. Do you think we should consider it?

*A.* I was laying stress on films, as I said to the Chairman, about health. That should be considerably advocated in the mofussil because great ignorance prevails there as regards, for instance, infantile mortality. The cinema can do a lot. The infantile mortality is far greater in India than in any other country, and that is the case much more in mofussil towns where indigenous *dhais* are in charge of maternity cases. If the kind of film which is exhibited by the Child Welfare Society at their yearly shows were made compulsory, I can assure you it would do a lot of good.

*Q.* I notice both of you are strongly in favour of Government doing something in the nature of visual instruction?

*A.* Quite right.

*Q.* Have you seen a large number of Indian films shown in Bombay?

*A.* They are fairly good in the city. I am not a frequent visitor but I see them exhibited outside.

*Q.* You see the posters?

*A.* Yes, and I know that in the city frequently they show Indian films.

*Q.* I was just wondering whether you consider the stories in those Indian films suitable and generally good or have you got some criticism to make of the stories that Indian producers adopt for their films?

*A.* I have not come across a sufficient number to criticise them.

*Mr. Neogy :* You are very keen that Government should undertake public and educational propaganda through the film?

*A.* Quite.

*Q.* And you stated that you would welcome Government starting a studio for the manufacture of such films?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Now there is an alternative way to bring this about. Instead of Government undertaking the manufacture of these films Government might entrust the work to private people, those who are already in the film producing trade. That might, to a certain extent, encourage the film industry. Would you be prepared to support Government owned studios in preference to Gov-

Government giving, say, orders for the manufacture of certain kinds of films on certain specifications, to the private people who run studios?

A. I do not mind encouraging private industry in that way; otherwise I would certainly prefer Government to do it.

Q. What do you mean? If you were sure that private people could turn out good work would you have any objection?

A. No. I would have no objection.

Q. Would you prefer that to Government agency or *vice versa*?

A. If it is responsible, if it is under proper control, I would advocate that, otherwise not. I would, to avoid all risks, prefer Government agency.

Q. You are also anxious that some sort of propaganda might be undertaken through the film in foreign countries?

A. Yes, I want to disseminate it in its true colours.

Q. I take it you visualise a propaganda entirely of a voluntary character and you do not consider that to be a business proposition at all. Either the National Congress or a Committee elected by the Legislature should undertake such propaganda work, not necessarily as a business proposition but purely as a voluntary work—is that your position?

A. Yes, but I say Government ought to help. I gave a typical example, that of Miss Mayo's book. What have the Government done in that respect. I would voluntarily help if I had the means to do so.

Q. For that purpose you don't want to depend on the trade. You want Government to undertake the duty of fighting misrepresentation abroad?

A. Yes, however much I might desire I would not have the means to do so; therefore it is part of the duty of Government to put its own country in its true colours, before others.

Q. Now Colonel Crawford put you a question. I did not understand your answer. He asked you whether you are prepared to provide different types of entertainment for different people, that is to say, Indian films for Indians and Western films for Europeans now are you prepared to support any arrangement which might either exclude Indians from theatres where the foreign films might be shown or exclude Europeans from theatres where Indian films are shown?

A. That was not my answer. My colleague gave it.

Q. This is not the answer which you gave but I want to understand the position. You are not prepared to support such a position?

A. Certainly not. I personally do not.

Mr. Malik: What I said in answer to Colonel Crawford's question was that we should certainly cater for all kinds of people. Now the question is whether there should be any control over it, whether films shown in theatres which are to the European taste should be open to Indians or not. If it is so there should be some sort of restriction put just as they do in the case of sex films "for adults only." So you could have "for Europeans only."

Colonel Crawford: I did not suggest that Indians should be excluded. I rather suggested it might be possible to say to one theatre catering already mainly for European audiences "Well you may show European films." I would not exclude Indians but I would not force a theatre at the same time to show films which the majority of its audience would not care to see.

Chairman: Had you not in your mind that certain theatres should show only a certain class of pictures?

Colonel Crawford: I had in my mind that it would be quite possible that you might require one or two theatres to cater for the European and Anglo-Indian community.

Mr. Neogy: Do you support that view or not?

Mr. Malik: I support that view as Colonel Crawford put it. The Indian films may be open to Europeans, but films of the kind which are not to the Indian taste which we generally condemn and which the Western people do

not condemn, let such films be shown to the Western people but not be open to Indians.

*Colonel Crawford* : Don't you think that films condemned on moral grounds should be condemned for everybody.

*Mr. Neogy* : There are Indians who have gone to Western countries, got their education there, lived there for very long, adopted Western habits of life—suppose they want to see those films?

A. Then you could put in a proviso about being Westernised. But we are not now considering the details.

Q. I quite see that they should not be denied their particular form of amusement but how are you going to bring that about? I am anxious to understand the exact scheme in which you can fit that idea?

A. These are details which can be worked out in various ways, just as they are in the case of films "for adults only." I have no objection to Indians who want to be on a parallel with Western people going to see these Western films. This much is certain. There is always a way out of such a difficulty—not one way but a hundred and one ways.

Q. Don't you think Indians generally do not like to go to a show where a film of that kind is being shown? Do they prefer to go to a show which might appeal to a European audience specially but which might not appeal to an Indian. Would an Indian go to such a show left to himself?

A. For instance, where there is a film with long kissing going on it may not be unpalatable to Western people.

Q. Why do you think that long kissing is not unpalatable to Western people?

A. Because they would not permit that film to be shown if they were against that sort of thing; but since they frequent such cinemas where such films are shown I take it that they do not object.

*Mr. Green* : Many of us do not frequent such cinemas.

*Mr. Neogy* : Would an Indian go to see such an unpalatable film?

A. No, it is demoralising to him.

Q. But does he go at all?

A. Well he has to have his amusement.

Q. Now you mentioned something about the special circumstances which might require a special censorship for the benefit of this particular province.

*Mr. Sidhu* : No. What I stated in answer to the Chairman's question was that Sind is a province by itself, separate in the sense that there are certain administrative powers vested in the Commissioner of Sind. Therefore for that purpose a special board should be created for Sind.

Q. Merely for that purpose? What I want to know is whether you think that the standard of censorship adopted for the other parts of the Province of Bombay is not good enough for Sind?

A. What I was stating was that if honorary members were appointed on those boards, elected from their own province, the selection would be more desirable than otherwise.

Q. Quite right but do you consider that the standard which the Bombay Board of Censors at present applies to these films does not suit Sind, or is it merely because Sind is a separate administrative unit for certain purposes that you want to have a Board of Censors attached to the local authorities?

A. No. I didn't say that.

*Mr. Coatman* : Just one or two questions to get a little more clear the kind of pictures that appeal to Indian audiences. You appeared in your replies to Mr. Neogy to distinguish between the taste of the educated Indians and the uneducated. Is that so?

*Mr. Malik* : You see I was asked supposing those Indians who had been abroad and adopted Western methods, if they want to see the films meant for Europeans, will you have any objection to their going to see them?

*Q.* I want to get away from that line for the moment. Do you believe that there is any difference between the taste of the educated Indian and the uneducated Indian audience?

*A.* You have to divide the educated into two classes, those who have been to Western countries and those who have not been. Of course then you will find a difference between the two, because the latter class have not seen the life of the West which in some cases is misrepresented. There may be nothing wrong in that but the people who have not been to the West cannot understand it.

*Q.* It is just a question of what they like then. Take the average Indian, whether he is educated or not, as long as he has not been to Europe or the West, what sort of pictures interest him most?

*A.* Cowboy pictures, murder, excitement, sensational dancing and all those things.

*Q.* Even the uneducated?

*A.* Even the uneducated. The cinemas have to cater for them.

*Q.* Has the uneducated man in this place any preference, would he rather go to a Western film or to an Indian film?

*A.* An Indian of the labouring class would like to go to a film where there is much sensation, much dancing and so on.

*Q.* That is your experience in Karachi?

*A.* Yes, so far as I have been to the cinema I find that whenever there is murder in seven reels, you find people flocking there. Then of course if there is anything taken from a well written novel by a well known writer the majority of the low class labourers will not go.

*Mr. Nungy :* They do not follow the subject?

*A.* Yes, and there are no exciting scenes which without their understanding them they enjoy. They see dancing in the harem of a palace for instance, and they like that.

*Chairman :* The uneducated do it or the educated?

*A.* The uneducated. And as regards the dances which are carried on in the West they cannot understand them, except that they are struck by the very scanty clothing. So far as I know, being a student of health, I think half nudity is worse than nakedness, it is more tempting than if the person were quite naked. These people like such films.

*Q.* You mean to say educated people do not like it?

*A.* They might like it but generally they avoid it unless they are Europe returned or when they want to keep company with Western people, but I mean so far as their taste is concerned, naturally not.

*Mr. Coatman :* Your experience is that the uneducated man likes violent action and excitement?

*A.* There is no harm in having a sensational film so long as it does not cross the border of morality.

*Q.* Is your home in Karachi?

*A.* My home is in Dera Ismail Khan.

*Q.* When were you there last time?

*A.* Some 8 years ago.

*Q.* There was no cinema there then. Do you go anywhere else?

*A.* I go to Lahore.

*Q.* Any smaller place than Lahore, a place about the size of Dera Ismail Khan?

*A.* I have been to Gwalior.

*Q.* Is there a cinema there?

*A.* In the mofussil there is a cinema; though during the time I was there there was none at Gwalior. I have got some lands there.



**Q.** Well, now, you mention the effect of the cinemas on crime and you gave us a specific instance. You will admit that it will be somewhat difficult to exclude all films that deal with crimes, but would you agree to this position that no film ought to show a crime committed in such detail that any member of the audience could learn how to commit that crime from seeing the film?

**A.** There is no harm in showing such films; on the contrary that will do some good, provided it is also shown how they were tempted to commit murder and crime and how they were taken to task, but new and scientific methods of committing crimes should as far as possible be avoided.

**Q.** If other things were equal, namely the technical value, educational value and so on, would you regard it as more desirable that films produced in the British Empire should be shown in India rather than films produced in America?

**A.** So long as the rules of censorship are observed and so far as the quality is all right, it matters very little what films you exhibit in India so long as they fulfil certain conditions.

**Q.** What I want to get at is this, India is a part not of the British Empire, but shall we say of the British Commonwealth. Therefore, *prima facie* it does seem desirable that the different parts of that Commonwealth should know each other more intimately than they know the other parts of the world. Do you agree to that?

**A.** If it comes to the question of industry being taken up by the British Commonwealth and then sending those films . . .

**Q.** I am thinking of the general position, that we, India, Australia, Canada, Great Britain and South Africa are part of one Commonwealth. Would you say that generally it is desirable that they should know each other better than they know the other parts of the world?

**A.** Yes, they should know each other in their true colours.

**Q.** I want to come to that point. There is a certain amount of misrepresentation or, I may say, misconception between the different parts of the Empire, and it is desirable that that misconception should be removed. Do you regard the cinema as a good agency for removing that misconception and dispelling ignorance?

**A.** Of course, it has got a very great educational value if the films are properly taken and if they represent the true character of the subjects treated.

**Q.** You would like the films produced in India by Indians to go to the different parts of the Empire?

**A.** Provided they have been produced under certain conditions and examined by those who know the conditions, because the people in the west would naturally like to know all about India, her people and their habits and so on. But as you know India is a vast continent, and a thing which may be common in Bengal may not be common in Madras; a thing which is considered objectionable here may not be considered objectionable in Bombay.

**Q.** Then as regards the general position you agree that it is desirable that the different parts of the Empire should know each other better and that the cinema is a good agency for that purpose?

**A.** Yes.

**Written Statement of Professor S. C. SHAHANI, M.A., Retired Principal, D. J. Sind College, and President, All-Sind Hindu Association, Karachi, dated the 11th November 1927.**

#### INTRODUCTORY.

1. I have no special knowledge of, or connection with, the Cinematograph Industry either in India or abroad.

## GENERAL.

2. Indians (1) of the educated classes and (2) of the illiterate classes now generally frequent Cinemas in urban areas. Such attendance is largely on the increase. My answers refer to Sind especially.

(b) Average Cinema audiences will be differently composed in different localities. In the Palace Theatre the audience will be composed mainly of the educated classes—European, Parsi and Portuguese and in the town of Karachi proper of Musalmans and Hindus, Mahrans, etc.

(c) The proportion of the audience consisting of children under 14 or adolescents of impressionable age will be more than one-third.

## PART I.

*Film Industry in India.*

3. In my opinion sensational films are the most popular with Indian audiences and generally in India.

4. The exhibitors are catering very inadequately for Indian audiences, who can be very religious if properly handled.

5. Indian-produced films, depicting Indian life, are not readily available to exhibitors. When they are, they are sometimes of good quality and then they are very popular. It is ordinarily more profitable to show an Indian than a Western film? Drup and Prahlad will be some examples of successful Indian films.

6. (a) I do think that films of Indian life—topical Indian news, and scenes (with Indian actors) depicting stories from the national literature, history and mythology, would be more popular with Indian audiences than the prevalent Western films.

(b) Of such films, (1) the historical would appeal most strongly to the educated classes, and (2) the religious to the illiterate population.

7. My experience of military life is inadequate.

8. (a) I am not satisfied with the present condition of the industry in this country in its several branches of production, distribution and exhibition.

(b) In my opinion the main difficulties besetting the industry are—inadequate technical training, cost of material, and no encouragement.

9. Good films are not readily obtainable by exhibitors at reasonable prices.

The tendency to monopoly of the supply or exhibition of films lies in the difficulties instanced above.

10. I have no experience of these systems.

11. The exhibitors in this country do not have sufficient facilities for previewing films.

12. The Amusement Tax is some handicap to the exhibitor.

13. Regarding the Tariff generally on all materials connected with the Film industry, it should be so framed that the indigenous production of films may be facilitated.

14. I do consider that an increased use of the Cinema for educational purposes in schools and for adult education in agriculture, public health, etc., by Government or other agencies would help the growth of the film industry in this country.

There will be considerable demand for such films.

15. Conditions in this country are favourable to development of an Indian film producing industry on a large scale. Almost all material could be produced in India, if technical education is better provided.

16. There are not at present enough Indian producers, directors, actors, actresses and scenario-writers of sufficient technical knowledge, enterprise, resource and adaptability on whom the country can depend for a substantial

output of films of real competitive exhibition value, but the supply can with reasonable care be easily provided.

Technical education, subsidies, cheap freight and such other measures can supply the deficiency.

17. I do consider that sufficient capital in India is or will be forthcoming, for film-production.

18. I do consider that suitable Government action whether legislative or administrative may be an effective incentive and encouragement to private enterprise for film-production. I suggest that technical education, subsidies, and cheap freights, and measures of that type will be suitable action for Government to take.

19. I have no special knowledge of how does the cost of film-production in this country compare with that in other countries.

20. (a) My proposals will involve some expenditure in the first instance from Government funds. Such expenditure is justifiable, having regard to other needs of the country, specially when the film industry will, if properly organized, aid production, and thus increase the State revenue.

(b) The sources from which such expenditure may be met, should in the first instance be, the savings made by paying the higher officials of all departments less than they are paid now, and by effecting economies in other respects in Indian administration.

21. I am against monopolies. But in the initial stages a State agency aided by advisory committees may prove useful.

#### *Films of the British Commonwealth.*

22. India should participate in the policy outlined in the resolution of the Imperial Conference to give some measure of encouragement to British Empire films. Such participation would—

(a) assist the development of her own film industry.

(b) assist in making herself better known and understood throughout the Empire and the world, and

(c) improve the standard of Western films shown in India.

The methods of putting such a policy into practice should know this limitation that India should have an equal place in the British Empire.

23. (a) Cinema pictures can greatly be used for making known the conditions, resources and habits of the peoples, and the activities of the various Governments, of the British Commonwealth of Nations to each other.

(b) For getting the various Governments to co-operate to this end, I would suggest the creation, among other things, of posts such as the Right Hon'ble Mr. Shastri holds in Africa.

## **PART II.**

### *Social aspects and control.*

24. (a) I consider that the sensational class of films exhibited in this country has a demoralising and otherwise injurious effect upon the public.

(b) There is general circulation of immoral or criminally suggestive films.

(c) That class of film which strengthens the principle of passion within man is harmful. It is harmful to the literate and illiterate alike.

(d) Censorship is not adequate in the cases of—

(1) Sex films,

(2) Crime films.

(e) There has been so far some increase of crime in my Province due to the Cinema.

25. I consider that the differences in the social customs and outlook between the West and the East necessitate special consideration in the censorship of films in this country.

26. (a) More care should be taken in censoring films likely to offend religious susceptibilities.

27. Some of the films exhibited in India have a tendency to misrepresent Western civilization and to lower it in the eyes of Indians. It is a fact that films representing Western life are generally unintelligible to an uneducated Indian and are largely misunderstood by him, and undesirable results do follow from this. My suggestions on this point are that such films should be carefully censored.

28. Answers to these questions are contained in the above answers.

29. I am not in favour of certification of certain films as "For Adults Only", because such limitation cannot be easily enforced.

30. I am not in favour of prohibiting all children below a certain age from visiting cinemas except for "Special Childrens' Performances".

31. I consider that censorship aided by general education is an effective method of guarding against misuse of the film.

32. I do not think that the present system of Censorship in my Province is satisfactory. The improvement that I would suggest is the aid in the work from advisory committees.

33. Strict Censorship would—

(a) interfere unreasonably with the recreations of the people,

(b) involve a falling off in the attendance at Cinemas,

(c) unduly interfere with the freedom required for artistic and inspirational development?

34. I would advocate the present Provincial Boards of Censors duly related to a single Central Board.

44. Public Bodies and the Press could largely assist in maintaining a good standard of films.

45. (a) Some control should be exercised by Government over film-production.

(b) Film-producing agencies should be registered and licensed, and their studios periodically inspected by both officials and members of advisory committees.

**\*Oral Evidence of Professor S. C. SHAHANI, ex-Principal, D. J. Sind College, on Monday, the 21st November 1927.**

*Chairman:* Mr. Shahani, you recently retired from the Principalship of the D. J. Sind College?

A. Yes.

Q. How long have you been connected with the Education Department?

A. For 36 years.

Q. I suppose you are a native of Sind?

A. Yes. But I have been for four years in Bombay as professor, and for 32 years in Karachi.

Q. You were also a member of the Legislative Assembly?

A. I was.

Q. You are the President of the All-Sind Hindu Association?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you go to the cinema often?

A. I don't go very often.

**Q.** I suppose you have had charge of a number of youngsters all these years since the cinema came into existence in 1910 or thereabout. Have you noticed any change of habits or thoughts in the young people who were in your charge?

**A.** They are taking very kindly to the cinema. I mean the college students, high school students, middle and upper and lower secondary school students.

**Q.** Do you notice any change in their mode of life or in their character?

**A.** They come to be better informed from the point of view of the human mind. It is very difficult to say if their character has deteriorated on account of the cinema, but still seeing the cinema has certainly brought about a change in the Indian boys to some extent.

**Q.** From your experience can you say that the cinema is producing any malignant influence on the Indian youths?

**A.** Of course, in the cinema the boys come to see how crime is perpetrated elsewhere, and when an educated man who is inclined towards crime sees a film and when he has information available, he tries to give effect to it in practice just as he uses knowledge of physics and chemistry. But beyond that I don't think the cinema has produced any malignant effect on the Indian youth.

**Q.** On the other hand, you think that the beneficial effect and the informative effect are very large?

**A.** Undoubtedly.

**Q.** I daresay you believe in the cinema as a method of educating the masses?

**A.** Certainly.

**Q.** Not only in the schools and colleges but in the general population, and you think the cinema should be largely used in giving instruction to the people?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You mean education in the broad sense of the term?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Is there any attempt made by the Government to do that?

**A.** Not much to my knowledge.

**Q.** Do you think it is essential that the Government should embark upon it?

**A.** I think so.

**Q.** I should like to ask you one question as a man having so much experience in educational matters. Do you think that the task of preparing educational and propaganda films as regards public health, agriculture and other things can be safely left to private agency with such aid as Government might give it or should it be done by Government?

**A.** It should be done by private agency aided by Government.

**Q.** Is there any agency which can do that work satisfactorily?

**A.** It has to be created.

**Q.** But why create a private agency? You think it will not be more satisfactory if the Government were to start a Government studio where they will prepare educational and other films, where they will also keep experts who could be lent out to private agencies for manufacturing their films. Because the studios now run by private agencies in Bombay are not quite up-to-date and satisfactory. The Government will also maintain experts in camera work, technique and so on, who can be lent out to private agencies, so that the Government studio will be as it were a factory where films needed for public purposes will be produced and it will also be useful for private agencies. Would you prefer that or you would leave it to the trade?

**A.** I believe in Government setting the example, I mean a model for others to follow. I believe in Government starting such a studio which would give help to private agencies and generally help the people in producing films.

**Q.** I want your considered opinion on that point. I suppose you attach great importance to the way in which educational films are prepared?

**A.** Yes, I do.

**Q.** And the Government are in possession of experts in that line, their own educational officers or others may be of value in producing good and useful educational films. Would you leave that work to Government or you would leave it to private effort to be aided by Government?

**A.** I would leave it to private effort to be aided by Government to serve as a model. Just as high schools and colleges are now being transferred to private agencies, in the same way I would advocate such a system, that is to say, Government should do the pioneering work and after it has been successful for some time, it should be handed over to suitable private agencies.

**Q.** Is there a taste among the students whom you have come across for getting into this line?

**A.** I am afraid technical education is not being imparted to the students, and on that account the taste which they possess in a potential form is not being developed.

**Q.** We are told that there is a great future for the Indian film industry. I see you advocate the imparting of technical education in your answers. Do you advocate then that there should be some branch of study introduced regarding photography and mainly as it applies to the cinema industry? Is that what you have in mind when you say that technical education should be imparted?

**A.** Yes, because I think that some of the boys will take to it kindly.

**Q.** Have you noticed any tendency on the part of the boys to go to the stage?

**A.** There is some tendency. The stage of the D. J. Sind College is well developed, and we have a special man who looks after the theatrical side, and if the profession is developed, I think, the Indian students will shine on the stage.

**Q.** Your technical education will comprise education in that direction as well, is it not?

**A.** Yes, and I think many boys will take to it. We have got about 600 boys in our college, and I think at least 40 or 50 of them will readily take to the stage if proper opportunities and training are given to them. Of course, there must be an opening for them in the future, otherwise they will never care to take to that line.

**Q.** You consider that Indian films are becoming more and more popular?

**A.** I have no direct knowledge about it, but I feel that they will become more popular. But as I have said, I know that Indian produced films are not readily available to exhibitors in this country. That is the complaint which I have heard from several people.

**Q.** Do you think that schools and colleges can put forth a combined effort to meet in one common place where films can be exhibited as part of their instruction?

**A.** They could have a separate department just as magic lantern shows are given.

**Q.** You think that every high school and college should have a separate cinematograph branch or would you have a place where the students can go once a week?

**A.** I feel the civic life here is not sufficiently organized for common effort.

**Q.** Cannot the high schools and colleges combine for that purpose and fix upon a common centre where these educational and instructional films can be shown to boys, say, once a week, so that each college may not have a separate department for this purpose?

**A.** If an effort were made by Government in this direction, I have no doubt co-ordination will be possible. Just as inter-collegiate lectures will be desirable, so I think inter-collegiate demonstrations will be desirable.

**Q.** And for that purpose a cinema show will be an attractive feature?

**A.** Yes, because the exhibits are demonstratively more exact.

**Q.** After all, you do not want to multiply the cost in the process of instruction?

**A.** No.

**Q.** Although you have given us some answers that good films are not readily available, I do not think you are sufficiently familiar with the trade, and I think I should rather not trouble you with questions on that aspect of the matter?

**A.** I am not familiar with the trade.

**Q.** You believe in subsidies and cheap freights in order to encourage the Indian industries?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** What sort of subsidies?

**A.** What I mean is this. Suppose there is a man who has special aptitude for producing films and if his case comes to be known to the department in charge of the cinema in any province, then he ought to be encouraged by giving him scholarships, or if he starts any industry, he ought to be given some subsidy by the State.

**Q.** There should be some general rules as regards subsidies. I understand your scholarship scheme that where a man shows an aptitude for the cinema line he ought to be sent abroad so that he may receive the finishing education?

**A.** During the great war the German industries were almost killed, and it was only with the aid of subsidies that they could revive. Firstly they imposed limitations upon the importation of foreign films and secondly, they gave subsidies. I would not impose a high duty on foreign films; that does find favour with me. We ought to be discriminating. If we had any censors in the province and they certified that a particular film has been very artistically executed, I should not like such an artistically executed film to be subjected to any heavy duty, and so we should be discriminating.

**Q.** It is rather difficult to discriminate?

**A.** Difficult undoubtedly it is, but we will have to devise some means.

**Q.** I can understand your exempting films which are of an educative character from duty?

**A.** Not only such films, but even the artistically executed films should be exempted from heavy import duty.

**Q.** Would you exempt them from import duty?

**A.** I can explain the point. Usually films minister to sensational enjoyment, but if a film can produce pleasure which is preferable as much to the senses as to the imagination, then I think such films ought to be exempted from taxes.

**Q.** That means that in the original instance you must impose a duty and when they have been exhibited and when you find that they satisfy the test mentioned by you, there should be a remission?

**A.** That is the idea. For instance, Sind has not taken to producing films, and on that account it would be very undesirable to impose a high import duty on all films.

**Q.** But Sind is part of Bombay and Bombay produces films?

**A.** In that case if Bombay can satisfy the demand for the whole of the Bombay Presidency, there should be a tax.

**Q.** Have you followed the quota system which is being introduced in England?

**A.** No, I have not followed it.

**Q.** You believe in scholarships, cheap freights, and I suppose you also believe in exemption from duty, of raw articles required for film industry?

A. Yes.

Q. I am rather interested in your answer to question No. 21. You are perhaps the first gentleman to advocate it in a way. Will you please explain your point. Do you want a State agency, because nobody else has advocated it. They all fight shy of it. What do you mean by saying the State agency aided by an Advisory Committee may prove useful. For what?

A. I mean that if the Government feel inclined to take action in that direction, they ought to consult the Advisory Committee before they arrive at final decision.

Q. We are the Advisory Committee for that purpose. Our question is whether you advocate such a thing as is advocated in the question, namely, for the production of a uniform standard?

A. I do.

Q. Would you leave it to a State agency like that?

A. I do believe in State Agency.

Q. For distribution, for exhibition and for production of the films?

A. I do believe in modifications, and not in severe rules.

Q. You mean the Government alone should import films?

A. Why alone?

Q. That is the question. According to you, it means that the Government should alone undertake the distribution, production, exhibition and import of all films so that a uniform standard may be observed in censorship? Is that what you mean?

A. I am against it.

Q. When you say "in the initial stages there should be a State agency", I suppose you mean it in the sense which you have already explained, namely, the starting of a model studio. Is that what you mean?

A. Yes, that is exactly what I mean.

Q. You say that India should participate in the Resolution outlined in the Imperial Conference, and you think that such participation would assist the development of your own film industry?

A. Our own means India.

Q. How is it?

A. Once a model institution is created India would follow, and as soon as India is able to do things for herself it would be quite all right.

Q. The policy outlined in the Resolution of the Imperial Conference is to give some measure of encouragement to British Empire films, and you say that would encourage and assist the development of Indian film industry?

A. Supposing very good films are imported from Australia, and if I know how those films are manufactured there, I shall pursue the same methods and create an industry in India. And more especially in the case of the British Empire films, there will be more intercourse between the different parts of the Empire.

Q. In order to improve your knowledge of each other?

A. After all, it is one Empire, and the encouragement which ought to be offered to the industries of the Empire might to some extent be reasonably denied to other parts of the world.

Q. So that provided it is not harmful to India, you are for showing some preference within the Empire?

A. Yes, that is my point of view.

Q. Would that be acceptable generally to the people, suppose it is not harmful to the Indian film industry?

A. Except to the extremists I think it would be acceptable to everybody, provided the other parts of the Empire also show courtesy to India.



Q. You mean provided the other arts of the Empire reciprocate not only in regard to film industry but in other directions as well, do you couple that with it?

A. Yes, quite right.

Q. You may also use the discrimination you mention as regards parts of the Empire, i.e., if a part of the Empire is particularly friendly to you, give her some preference, and in one part is not quite so friendly to you, you may ignore her; I suppose you advocate it in that sense?

A. Yes.

Q. What you have in mind in your answer to 23-B is that you want really a man in the position of Trade Commissioner in every part of the world—at any rate in parts of the Empire—on behalf of India. That is what you have in mind—not merely a political agent but a trade commissioner who will get into touch with the trade conditions and industry conditions?

A. Yes, and a man of high thinking.

Q. A man who will put India first and everything else afterwards.

A. Yes.

Q. Now, I think, you have answered the question, you think there is a general demoralising effect on the public from the sensational nature of the films exhibited?

A. Yes.

Q. You have seen such films?

A. I have seen them.

Q. I mean if you were on the censors board, would you not have passed them or certain portion of them?

A. No, I would not have.

Q. Have you seen many such or only a few?

A. I don't go very often.

Q. And from the few occasions when you have gone the impression left on your mind is that there are certain things which you would rather not have passed if you were on the board?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you advocate a different standard of censorship for the east and the west or do you advocate the same standard so far as the moral atmosphere is concerned?

A. I want to distinguish between the western moral sense and the eastern moral sense generally.

Q. Would you have a different standard of censorship?

A. Well, let me give an instance. Marriage, for instance, for a term of four years may be viewed with pleasure in the west but it would be atrocious out here.

Q. I don't think it is viewed with pleasure anywhere.

A. In some places I think it is. Wherever emphasis is not placed on the intuitive part of the human entity I would be disposed to exercise a severe censorship in the case of films that are exhibited anywhere in the east.

Q. In the east, would you make a distinction between western audiences and eastern audiences?

A. I have not been to the west.

Q. But in India?

A. I would have no objection to western audiences going in for sights such as these.

Q. Would you have special theatres marked off for Indians?

A. I don't believe in special theatres but if things assume abnormal proportions I would like the board to step in.

Q. What is it you have in mind?

A. I have this in mind that the censorship should be very reasonable. That every film should be examined before it is exhibited is not agreeable to me. I would like things to take their own course until things assume abnormal proportions then I want that there should be a board to step in to advise Government to step in at once for the organisation of civic life. I am for that course.

Q. You mean there must be vigilance associations to watch these cinemas and if they complain, the board should have power to call it back.

A. Yes, that is my idea. I don't wish that there should be too much censorship.

Q. You are not a believer in too much censorship. But you would rather that a complaint is made by a vigilance association; then the censorship board should intervene.

Mr. Green: Do I gather from Mr. Shahani that censorship is not necessary in the first instance at all? That any theatre can exhibit any film?

A. Yes, I think on the whole that would be better.

Q. Then you are for post-censorship after the public have seen the film, not before?

A. Yes.

Chairman: So that when the public complain or the vigilance association complain, action may be taken. Do you think the public conscience is sufficiently alive for this?

A. No, the intelligentsia, the intelligent representatives of the public, if matters are not going right, and if they raise their voice, they ought to be heeded and there should be a machinery an agency for acting on their complaint.

Q. You want a *post-cortem* censorship, that is what you want.

A. I want the film completely extinguished and not wait to see them go out of the market of the theatres.

Q. I don't follow.

A. Supposing there is a complaint against any films and the films are being exhibited and supposing the information reaches the board, the board examines the matter and finds that the complaint is just, then the exhibition of such films ought to be ended.

Mr. Green: Such films or that particular film?

A. That particular film.

Chairman: I see, that is all. That I understand. But I thought you said films should cease to exist.

A. Not all films. Only that film should go.

Q. So you would rather wait for public complaint.

A. Yes.

Q. You would encourage the growth of vigilance associations in this connection. You take a broader view than many others.

A. That is my view.

Q. Then I suppose you have not seen the censorship rules that now obtain, because you are suggesting some rules that are already there. You are not in favour of the certification of certain films as for adults only?

A. No.

Q. Why do you say it cannot be enforced if there was such a limitation?

A. But why enforce it? When the mind is not constitutionally different to the mind of a man?

Q. Are they not more impressionable?

A. More impressionable they are, but if you keep back what they might yearn to see, they might become moral valetudinarians.

Q. You don't want special children's performances?

A. Just now we have no machinery for preventing certain films being exhibited. If I know certain films are bad, I would like my children not to go, and yet I cannot prevent them. And so I say some prevention should become possible.

Q. I am referring to your answer to question 30. You are not in favour of prohibiting children?

A. No, I am not in favour.

Q. You would allow them freely to every performance till objection is taken and the film is stopped?

A. Yes.

Q. You think the present system of censorship is not satisfactory,—see your answer to 32.

A. I state that the present system of censorship in the province of Sind is not satisfactory.

Q. There is no censorship there except in Bombay. What is it you want?

A. I want it more vigilantly done.

Q. But you are advocating no censorship.

A. I am under the impression that there is no censorship or only nominal censorship in a province such as this.

Q. But every film which comes to Sind is censored in Bombay or some other place.

A. Quite true. But mere Government censorship means some money in the pockets of those that censor. I want that the censorship should be real and discriminating.

Q. Just now you advocated that there should be censorship prior to exhibition.

A. Yes, but even after exhibition there should be censorship—the provision should be there.

Q. It is for this after-censorship.

A. Supposing certain films are known to be bad in the west and they are imported in the east, there should be some censorship in regard to this.

Q. I see. It is for that purpose you want some advisory committees? Advising whom?

A. Advising Government.

Q. Should they be a paid body or an honorary body?

A. No, not a paid body.

Q. An honorary body to see the pictures. Your idea throughout is that only objectionable films should be censored. Therefore, the work will be less and you think it may be left to an advisory board.

A. Yes.

Q. And you say: "I would advocate....."

A. I would like to say just a little with regard to that. I feel that agricultural theory or agricultural practice does not produce the effect which it is intended to, because for instance there is no village organisation in the first instance. We want a village organisation and then a taluka organisation, then a district organisation, then divisional organisation and then provincial organisation. I believe a system such as this is necessary, not only in the case of films but in every activity and I am referring only to some such scheme.

Mr. Neogy: In one place I find that you observe that an Indian audience can be more religious if properly guided. Will you kindly develop it?

A. Yes. An Indian believes that a very ordinary man is yet essentially divine and he feels that he is animated by the force that is animating and controlling the universe. Now if that is the Indian religious belief there should be nothing to reduce it and to defeat it. And if, for instance, a systematic exhibition of films in Indian colleges and schools has a tendency

to kill this consciousness or sub-consciousness, then I say it will be altogether detrimental to Indian life.

Q. Do you find that the average western film that is shown to-day has that tendency?

A. I could not make that statement but I have seen some films that have a tendency of that kind and I would very much like that these films should be kept out of schools at any rate.

Q. Are any of these films shown in schools?

A. Yes. I will tell you how they are shown. A recognised expert offers his services to the educational department and he is paid; he tours and exhibits his films in different schools and if the films are not what they ought to be the effect of such a exhibition would be the one which I describe.

Q. But were any such films, such as you object to, shown in the schools?

A. I don't know. But I know that films have been shown.

Q. Have you any definite suggestion to make so that this particular influence might be guarded against? Because I understood you to say that you were not in favour of certain films being advertised for adults only. How do you propose to keep back this influence from the youngsters?

A. I believe in the Indian film industry and if, for instance, Indian films are produced and exhibited to the extent to which western films are exhibited, then the two effects will be neutralised and if the industry gains strength then on the whole the influence will be good.

Q. So the remedy ultimately lies in the development of our own film industry?

A. Yes.

Q. Now, you are in favour of some discrimination being made on the basis of the artistic and educational value of films, provided the import duties are put up very high, as a measure of protection. But how would you again give effect to your ideas of preference for Empire films?—because that would bring in another consideration.

A. Thus: if I want to develop my industry properly then I ought to be well-informed and I feel if I show particular friendliness to the different parts of the Empire then those parts will also show friendliness.

Q. Then even in regard to these Empire films, you would be prepared to discriminate in favour of such of them as possess artistic and educational value of a high order and would be valuable from that point of view?—not merely because they are Empire productions?

A. But to some extent I would bear that in mind too. Namely, that if artistic and educational films produced in other parts of the world are available, I would as between them and the artistic and educational films of any part of the Empire, I would show preference to the films that are made within the Empire.

Q. That is to say, other things being equal, you would give preference to them.

A. Yes.

Q. But have you any practical suggestion to make as to how this could be worked out?

A. I think that suggestion was in a manner kindly made by the President, namely, that if I know that any part of the Empire is friendly to me, I too would be friendly to that part of the Empire.

Q. But how to bring it about? Would you have a separate schedule of customs tariff?

A. Well, some discrimination in the schedule.

Q. Of course, the quality being the same and the price also, I suppose?

A. To a large extent.

*Q.* Because if the price is higher than for foreign films it might act as a hardship to the exhibitor here.

*A.* I have no doubt that that factor would be controlled.

*Q.* It has been suggested by some exhibitors that the price is higher in the case of British Empire films.

*A.* Just a little higher—it does not matter.

*Q.* Then they must possess artistic and educational value and they must not be inferior in any way to other films and then the price must not be exorbitant.

*A.* Quite right.

*Q.* Are you generally in favour of preference as a policy?

*A.* I am rather not. Because I know they don't show any preference to India.

*Q.* Supposing they were prepared to show?

*A.* Then I would be prepared to show preference too.

*Mr. Coatsman:* You said the United Kingdom does not show preference to India?

*A.* No, I didn't say that.

*Mr. Green:* It gives preference in at least three very important commodities—tea, sugar and tobacco.

*A.* Then I would be prepared to reciprocate.

*Mr. Coatsman:* And the United Kingdom gives such preference with no corresponding obligation from India.

*Mr. Neogy:* So you are in favour of Imperial preference as a general economic policy?

*A.* Yes.

*Colonel Crawford:* You have never been to the west?

*A.* No.

*Q.* Have you seen a good number of western films displayed in India?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Do you think that is the normal life of the western people?

*A.* Well, that is the modern life. That is surely not the classical life exhibited by a writer like Shakespeare.

*Q.* No, but do you think the films even show the normal modern life of the people of the west?

*A.* They do—at least most of them do. Or rather I would say some of them do show the normal modern life.

*Q.* You believe that all these night clubs and cabarets that are shown on the screen, you think it is quite common for us to go to these?

*A.* Yes.

**\*Oral Evidence of Mr. M. B. HIRANANDANI, Vakil, on Tuesday, the 22nd November 1927.**

*Mr. Hiranandani:* I am a vakil here. I have passed the local pleaders' examination. I am a B. A. of the Bombay University.

*Chairman:* You are working in partnership with Mr. Harchandrai Visihindas?

*A.* Yes. I frequent the cinemas. Lots of educated people like me go to the cinema.

*Q.* I see the cinema is very popular in Karachi?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* I notice in to-day's papers that another cinema is going to be opened.

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Where do you generally go?

*A.* I generally go to the Capitol Cinema and to the Palace. I also off and on go to the Crown Cinema. In fact, I go to all but generally I go to the Capitol, Palace and the Crown.

*Q.* In which of them are Indian films shown?

*A.* None.

*Q.* Do you see Indian films at all?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Where do you see them?

*A.* In the Imperial, sometime back it used to be called the Kohinoor Cinema. Sometimes I see Madans' productions in the Star Cinema.

*Mr. Neogy:* Indian films you mean?

*A.* Yes, Bengali films produced in Calcutta.

*Q.* Are they popular?

*A.* They are to a certain extent popular. Films featuring the life of some saints, such as, Dhruva and so on.

*Chairman:* Religious films produced by Madans?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Are these films shown in the Imperial?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Both social and religious?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Do people of your standard frequent Indian films much?

*A.* Not very much, but sometimes we do go whenever there is an interesting picture, when the title is inviting or there is some religious picture.

*Q.* You appreciate them?

*A.* The artistic level is not very much.

*Q.* Notwithstanding that you do go?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* You think they are becoming very popular with Indian audiences?

*A.* Yes. You cannot even get a ticket at these shows, they are so very popular.

*Q.* You see western films more often than Indian films?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* And people of your age and of your class--do they go in large numbers to these western films?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Do you take your ladies with you?

*A.* Very rarely.

*Q.* Do Indian ladies go to these western shows?

*A.* Parsee ladies frequent these cinemas very much.

*Q.* The other Indian ladies do not go, either Hindu or Muslim?

*A.* Very seldom.

*Q.* But they go to these Indian shows?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Very freely?

*A.* Yes. In fact, ladies of my own house go more often to the Indian pictures, because they understand them better.

*Q.* Do you see what you call the uneducated Indians or rather the labouring classes, at western shows?

*A.* I see some sprinkling of them in the last class.

Q. A small number in the last class?

A. Yes.

Q. I suppose you won't mind answering this question. Young people like you, impressionable people like you—I suppose you are impressionable?

A. I think I am, I am not yet 30.

Q. You are still in the prime of life. What is the effect of these western films on the youth of the country?

A. My own opinion is that it is very good entertainment, and more often we become wiser after having gone to the pictures.

Q. Do you think it has a demoralising effect on the youth of the country?

A. Speaking for myself, I think there has been none, and speaking generally for others, I do feel that there is no demoralising effect.

Q. You are a frequenter of the cinemas?

A. I go thrice in a week.

Q. Till you get very busy in the profession?

A. Yes. I am only a junior at the Bar at present.

Q. Do you think the censorship is adequate as far as it goes?

A. If I may judge from the result of the pictures which we are seeing, I think there is not very much to complain about regarding the censorship.

Q. Is that opinion shared by young men like you?

A. We go in numbers in company and we feel there is nothing objectionable in the pictures.

Q. You do not mind a little bit of semi-nudity?

A. Personally, I do not find anything objectionable in that.

Q. Does it leave any impression on you or craving in youths like you by seeing such things?

A. I do not think so. It is a matter of such ordinary occurrence that it rarely impresses one. More often than not we see the other side of the picture.

Q. You go for amusement and when you go back you do not think about it? Is that the result?

A. Yes.

Q. Or by frequently going like that does it leave any impression?

A. Unless there is something of lasting interest in the picture. More often our interest is only passing, it is an amusement.

Q. You have had the amusement and there you are and you forget it?

A. Yes.

Q. I suppose you come in contact with the so-called uneducated classes who go to the cinema?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think they are in any way affected?

A. Personally, I do not think they will be affected from the nudity point of view. But in one respect I do feel they are hit. When you have got some extraordinary crook pictures and crime is shown in disgusting details, pick-pocketing, burglary, and so on, criminally minded people may be affected injuriously, but otherwise there is nothing.

Q. I suppose you cannot recall any instance like that?

A. No.

Q. Do you practise in the Magistrates' Courts also?

A. I do go, not very much, but I have gone there.

Q. Have you got a Bar Association here?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you come across any instance where the accused in a criminal case was alleged to have acquired the knowledge by going to the cinema?

A. I am afraid not.

Q. You did not come across any such instance?

A. No, nor have I read any such thing.

Q. But you do think that a little amount of more censoring is needed in the methods of crime?

A. Personally I would not even advocate that.

Q. You think there is just a possibility?

A. Yes.

Q. But you do not think it is serious?

A. No.

Mr. Neogy: You are not very much satisfied with the quality of the Indian pictures at present?

A. No.

Q. What steps do you think should be taken to encourage the present Indian industry so that the quality might improve? Have you read anything about the system which has just now been introduced in England and which is known as the quota system?

A. I have read something about it in the papers.

Q. The English theatres in England will be compelled to show a certain proportion of British films. Do you advocate any such system here for the benefit of the Indian film industry?

A. I think if some of the cinemas which are showing exclusively these western pictures are made to show some Indian pictures, there is a possibility of the level of the Indian pictures rising and they might be able to show better things.

Q. What effect would it have on the audience; suppose the audience is composed of Indians as well as Europeans.

A. The Indians would patronise.

Q. That is to say, the type of Indians who go to the western pictures alone—they would not mind Indian pictures being shown there?

A. No. It has become a sort of habit to go to the cinema with some people. Many times they just step in without knowing what film is being shown.

Q. What about the European audience?

A. I can recall to mind about 4 or 5 occasions when I have gone to Indian pictures where I have found several European gentlemen and ladies. Even the other day I saw some European ladies present, I do not know whether they were the wives of officials or not.

Q. So you do not think that there would be any prejudicial effect on the attendance of Europeans in these cinemas?

A. In the beginning it might have a little effect, but afterwards as the pictures become better, I do not think it would be seriously affected.

Q. Did you follow our proceedings in Bombay?

A. Only the evidence of one lady.

Q. Do you take much interest in politics?

A. No. In fact I am not a member of any political association. I do not take any interest in politics.

Q. Are you aware that a suggestion has been made that a scheme of reciprocity may be adopted under which Indian films may be sent out to other parts of the Empire and films produced in other parts of the Empire, particularly, England, may be brought out to India for exhibition here? Do you think Indian opinion will support this?



A. I cannot speak of Indian opinion, but one thing I am certain of and it is this. If you show these Indian pictures in England I shall have to use some harsh word. It is unthinkable that the films produced in India should be shown in England.

Q. Why?

A. They are of such a low level from the artistic point of view,—otherwise there is nothing wrong in them—I do not think any man in England will condescend to see the pictures.

Chairman: You mean it is not likely to be patronised?

A. Yes. They won't be patronised. Even "The Light of Asia," of which they are talking so much, except the part of the wife of Buddha who made a lovely picture and her acting too was good—it could not be compared with even second rate films like "The Rat," "Ben-Hur" and the like. "The Light of Asia" is a trifle compared with these pictures. Nobody will see these Indian pictures in England.

Colonel Crawford: Have you anything to say regarding the prices charged by exhibitors in the theatres?

A. No. I think they are fair.

Q. You think they are reasonably fair and within the pockets of the people generally?

A. Yes.

Q. I am interested in the question which Mr. Neogy put to you. Are you satisfied yourself with the stories upon which the Indian films are built up?

A. Religious or social?

Q. The social?

A. Sometimes there are some exaggerations in them.

Q. I want to know if you want to improve the industry from the point of view of the kind of stories upon which these pictures are built up?

A. Sometimes I think the type of story is absurd and it would not be liked by any educated person.

Q. Do you think it is a typical Indian story, or do you think it a foreign story dressed up in Indian garb?

A. They introduce, to a certain extent, Indian atmosphere into the pictures and the stories also pertain to Indian life. But they are not so convincing as these modern stories should be to an educated man. Sometimes they do introduce some of the sensational features of the western pictures also.

**Written Statement of Mr KARAMCHAND BULCHAND, Director,  
" Educational Kinematograph," Hyderabad, Sind, dated the 11th  
November 1927.**

1. *Personal and Introductory.*—I was intimately connected with the Kinema industry from 1914 to 1924 and specialised in the Educational aspect of the Industry and in entertainment films of a healthy character suitable for exhibition to children and women of India. As early as 1915 I anticipated the evil effects of the cinema films on the child mind and on the masses of India, and published a pamphlet on the "Use of the Kinematograph in Education" tackling some of the problems on which the Committee is asking evidence. I am told my pamphlet was one of the first documents on the strength of which Sir William Vincent introduced the Censorship Bill.

In 1915 I collected a library of educational films and travelled all over India demonstrating to schools and colleges and educational authorities the use of the Kinema in education. As the attention of the Government and the public was taken up with the Great War, I took to war publicity and propaganda on behalf

of the War League and travelled in Kathiawar States, Bombay, the Punjab and Central India agencies showing war films for Publicity Committees and propaganda among the masses.

After the War in 1918 and 1919 I took to propaganda work in Health and Agriculture. The Directors of Public Health in Bengal and the United Provinces asked me to give demonstrations of my films on the Fly Danger, the Mosquito and Malaria, the Rat and the Plague and Tuberculosis and Baby Welfare films in most of the big towns in the provinces. In this connection I brought out my film on *Indian Motherhood* suited to Indian conditions and this film was exhibited at several Child Welfare exhibitions.

Between 1919 and 1923 I was engaged in Health and Industrial publicity in the Jute mills of Calcutta and among the workers in the Coal Mines of Jherria and Ranigunge.

About 1924 I retired from the business because, owing to trade depression, the Jute and Coal industries could not afford the propaganda and Government did not then realise the immense potentialities of the Kinema for propaganda work. I am now the Headmaster of a High school in Hyderabad Sind.

I presented my Library of Educational films of about 90,000 feet, costing about 30,000 rupees to the Visual Department of the Educational Department, Bombay.

2. *Cinema Audiences.*—My experience of Kinema audiences is confined to Calcutta, Bombay, Karachi and Hyderabad, Sind. In big towns like Calcutta, Bombay and Karachi there are separate cinemas which cater for educated and better class of people and others which pander to the lower tastes of the masses. The former show high class films, chiefly dramas, and the latter specialise in blood and thunder type of films in which there are hair breadth escapades and hair raising incidents, in serials. These latter are usually crowded and are patronised by mill hands and coolies and the lower classes. Children frequent both these classes of cinemas but very much like the "serial" type in which there is plenty of fighting. In smaller towns like Hyderabad the educated people have not formed any tastes and generally do not frequent Kinemas and therefore the Drama type of the superior Kinema has little chance of success and the "Serial" type flourishes. Children under 13 form a bulk of the audiences and form about 30 per cent. of the audiences. But for getting exact figures I have a suggestion to make.

1. *Suggestion.*—About 8 years ago the Cinema Committee of England issued a questionnaire to all schools in England enquiring how often boys visited cinemas, what sort of films they like best, how far they appreciate them, etc. Perhaps a similar questionnaire may be sent round to schools in India, particularly in bigger towns where Cinemas are popular.

I once asked my class of 50 boys (Matriculation) what was their ambition in life. Five boys wrote "to be Eddie Polo", the hero of serials.

3. *Films Popular with Indian Audiences.*—The better class of audiences like dramas, and the lower classes patronise films showing fighting, adventure, thrills, etc., of the "serial" type. The films which show love demonstrations, kissing and embracing are very popular with the lower classes and whenever there is a kiss or any demonstration of the kind there are cat calls, screeches and whistles showing how the audiences gloat over them.

4. *Are Exhibitors Catering Adequately for Indian Audiences?*—The Exhibitors in the cinema business are there not for health, or for any higher motives. They want money and a fair return on their capital. They have their hand on the pulse of their audiences and they will supply the stuff their patrons want. Of course there is a great demand for the serial, adventure stuff, particularly in the down town cinemas and smaller towns. The dramas are at a discount. On the whole the exhibitors are adequately supplying the demand of the lower classes.

5. *Indian Produced Films.*—Depicting Indian life came on the market about the year 1913 and became very popular and Mr. Phalke earned a lot of money. Indians patronised these films because of their religious character. There was very little acting or scenario, but merely because it was Indian. I met some

exhibitors in Karachi' and enquired how the Indian films were going with their audiences and they said that they were getting unpopular because of the monotonous "sameness" of their characters, dresses and actors. The scenarios are poorly written. And if the Indian films still continue in their popularity it is with the lower classes of the audiences who do not appreciate good acting or good scenario. Most of the popular Indian producing companies are taking to the sensational methods of the western films—fighting, love demonstrations. I have seen in some Indian films Krishna kissing Radha in the most western-cinema fashion and embracing her as an Englishman would. In fact some Indian producers are imitating the worse portions of western films to pander to the tastes of the lower classes. Usually the producing proprietors are business men with no ideals and who think of nothing but making money. Some of them are common bunyas who are most sordid in their ways. The quality of Indian films are very poor. The scenarios are extremely bad and actors are picked from the streets. Decent class ladies in India will never act on the screen, so the managers have to resort to brothels to get women of ill fame to act and I know of some studios which are dens of immorality. If the Indian films are patronised it is because the appreciative powers of Indian audiences are very low. Most Indians have never seen high class films produced by Metro-Goldwyn, Paramount and other well known American companies. I made it a point to see the most highly talked of film "The Light of Asia" produced by a Bengali gentleman and shown by command to His Majesty the King. Though the film contained some gorgeous scenes through the courtesy of the Maharajah of Jaipur, the story and technique, in my eyes, was poor when compared with American productions. \*

6. *Stories from Indian Literature and Mythology.*—There is an immense wealth of material in Indian literature and mythology for kinema stories and some of it has been exploited though very poorly. It should clearly be grasped that it is not the story that goes to make a film a success. The art lies in how the story is represented on the screen, the little human touches which tickle the audiences, the selection of the actors suited to the character and the natural acting in which the American industry has specialised so thoroughly. It is not till the Indian film industry has secured the services of the right kind of scenario writers and can give the proper setting and specialise in the subtle touches that go to make a film successful, that the industry can hope to look up and Indian films will be patronised by both the educated and the illiterate.

The idea of having topicals of Indian interest is very good but it needs organisation and cinematographers in most of the big towns which is very difficult. It appears that there is only one big firm at present which is monopolising the industry, Messrs. Madan & Co., and if they do not care to show the topical it will be doomed. Only they can produce their own topical. I don't think they have the initiative or the organisation to carry it out effectively.

7, 8, 10, 11, 12, & 13.—Can best be answered by Exhibitors.

14. *The Educational use of the Kinematograph.*—I have specialised in this branch of the industry and have followed with keen interest the growth of the use of the Kinema in Education in America. Almost all the important Universities in America have hundreds of educational films which they lend out to schools and colleges free of cost. Besides, the departments of Agriculture and Industry and Health and Mines each have innumerable films which can be had for the asking. Many advertising firms have films showing the various processes of manufacture of their articles and the Ford Educational films are all very cheap and very suitable for exhibition in schools, colleges and the people and University extension movement. There is a very large field for the production of films of this kind in India, but only Government can undertake this kind of work. There are no rich universities or philanthropic public bodies that can do it.

The educational use of the Kinematograph will not help the industry and we must keep it distinct from the entertainment value of it. It should be clearly grasped that when people go to the cinema after dinner, they go there to be amused, not instructed. They would not mind having a little instruction if it

can be properly sugar coated but if they have it in large doses they will refuse to go to the cinema altogether. The usual proportion of Instructional films to entertainment films in big town cinemas catering for better class audiences does not exceed two reels—one topical and one scenic or industrial. In smaller and "Serial" cinemas even that is tabooed.

There is no doubt that the Kinema is bound to be an essential part of the equipment of an up-to-date school, as it is in America. All new schools that are built have special arrangements for film demonstrations. Films are had free of cost from Universities, Departments of Agriculture and Industry and advertisers and magazines of educational films help them to select the films of right sort for boys. I carried on the experiment of showing instructional films to schools for 8 years but did not receive the help I expected from the Departments of Public Instruction. If the Kinema is to be utilised for school instruction the films should fit in exactly with school curriculum and with the class text books. This is being done in America. In India special films suited to Indian surroundings will have to be specially prepared.

In the field of Health and Agricultural propaganda, I did this work for nearly five years among millhands, miners, school children and the general public. All my demonstrations were given in the open air and were free to the public. A demonstrator from the Health Department usually spoke, explaining the films and giving health hints and the demonstrations were much appreciated by the audiences. In big towns the shows were arranged in a central place where thousands of people attended. Special purdah shows were arranged for ladies where Baby Welfare and Motherhood films were shown. In this connection I produced my own film on *Indian Motherhood* with the help of the Bombay Municipality and Grant Medical College. It fitted exactly with the surroundings in Bombay Presidency. In agricultural propaganda I showed modern method of agriculture, improved implements, cattle rearing, milk supply, etc., at Cattle shows, Durbar meetings and to agriculturists at Agricultural exhibitions. These were very popular.

The Educational, Health and Agricultural films should not be left to the ordinary cinema exhibitors to exploit. The Government should undertake this work. It should get together the best films on Education, Health and Agriculture from abroad and have special Indian films prepared. It should have itinerant demonstrators who should go about demonstrating these films to schools, municipalities, agriculturists, etc. About ten years ago I prepared a Scheme for this kind of propaganda and presented it to the Educational Commissioner, Government of India, Mr. H. Sharp (now Sir, and retired) a copy of this Scheme I attach herewith. The figures of cost, etc., are now out of date but the main idea will be useful for any future working of a scheme of this sort.

I believe the Health and Agriculture Departments of the Provincial governments earmark funds for propaganda and cinema apparatus should be acquired from this. The Central Government should supply films free from the Central Film Library. I shall be glad to give several useful educational and health films to the Government free of cost.

The Health and Agriculture propaganda demonstration should of course have a judicious mixture of entertainment film, a healthy comic or scenic to enliven the audience. My usual ratio was 70 per cent. instruction to 30 per cent. amusement.

At present there is no demand for educational films because the cinema industry does not care much for them and there are no other agencies to work them.

15. *Film Producing in India.*—The climatic conditions of India are very favourable to film producing. There is the bright sun and varied scenery of all types and it is very much cheaper to produce films in India than in England or America where they need artificial light to produce pictures and where they spend enormous sums to produce scenery which in India could be had for nothing.

But what India lacks is the technique and brains to write scenarios and actors to interpret them. The industry has fallen into the hands of men who have no culture and who have no vision. They work it as a Banya would work his shop. They would use the same dress for all sorts of dramas and the actors are the same without regard for the character expression. The lady parts are enacted by women plucked from brothels and who can have no interest. No wonder that the industry is bound to go down. Unless the better class and cultured people take to it and import fresh vigour and new ideas into the industry there is little hope for it.

16. *Indian Producers, Directors and Scenario Writers.*—They are all poor stuff. One has only to enquire into the antecedents of them and one will find that they have taken to the line as a mere money making machine and have no culture or elevated ideas to uplift the industry. They have no enterprise. I gave them a scenario for *Nur Jehan* but they refused to produce it because they thought that the producing of the drama would mean a great outlay of capital and making of Mahomedan dresses which they could not afford.

I would suggest importing American talent to guide and instruct Indian talent. Or sending young men to America to acquire the talent. I do not think the producing companies have the foresight to try this. It would be difficult to suggest to the Government to give scholarships and send out young men to America because I am afraid there will be no field for them when they return.

18. *Government aid to private enterprise.*—I think it may help but one has to carefully see what kind and quality of private enterprise it is. If it is like most of the present companies, then it had better not be given. I am distinctly of opinion that industries like the Cinema should best be left alone to work out their salvation in the entertainment field. The law of supply and demand should govern the industry. Propping up an industry that can not work out its salvation is bad policy.

Of course it will be otherwise in the Health and Agricultural propaganda, which in the present state of conditions needs help from Government.

21. *State Agency to Monopolise Film Industry.*—The proposal to have a State agency to monopolise film industry with a view to produce films to conform to moral standards and of educational value, is not desirable or practical. In the first place, how is the State Agency going to fix standards of morality which vary between different communities and different peoples inhabiting the land? Secondly, in the present state of conditions prevailing in the country, everything emanating from the Government is looked upon with suspicion. Besides, the Government of India is so much swathed round with redtapism that it will not be possible to make headway and will make a mess of everything. Nowhere has Government interfered with the cinema industry in this fashion. The only way in which Government can control the industry is to have a well devised censorship.

Further, for the Government to take up the cinema industry to set up moral ideals among the people is absurd. Let it be clearly understood that people do not go to cinemas to form moral ideals or revise them. They want amusement and this has to be given to them in the best form available. The Government should see that it is healthy.

22. *British Empire Films.*—The proposal to have India participate in a British Empire Film Scheme will do harm to the industry. In the first place the average standard of English films is low compared with American films. The British producers, unfortunately, have not the right sort of scenario writers that America has, nor have they the wide field for selection of actors as they have in Los Angeles, America. Besides, the mechanical difficulties for producing films are greater than in America or in India. English producers are deficient in mechanical appliances, like floodlights, producing plants, studios with vast scenery arrangements, etc. America is using enormous capital in the industry and consequently the standard of American pictures is very high compared with British productions. It is all a matter of organisation and localisation of the industry. The British and educated Indian public have already formed a high standard of

judging pictures from American productions and to restrict American pictures will be harmful to the industry. It will not be right to thrust British or Indian pictures of medium merit merely to patronise or prop up an industry.

(a) I think British films will not stand in competition with Indian films as both are low in their standards—Indian films more so,—when compared with American films.

(b) I think we should not utilise the Kinema for Empire propaganda, unless it be for educational use. Under no circumstances should the Empire propaganda be carried on in cinemas where people go for entertainment and not for instruction.

(c) I do not think it will—because the standard of British films is not high and it cannot set itself up as a standard or model for Indian productions.

23. *Kinema as Propaganda for British Commonwealth.*—This should go with the educational use of the Kinematograph and not with the entertainment side of it, as represented in the cinemas. In America they have films showing the various activities of the Government and these films are lent free to schools and colleges and to new immigrants to teach them citizenship. This work should be done by the Government at its own expense.

(b) It would be very good if the Government of India could in this connection produce a series of films depicting various phases of the life of the peoples living in the Indian Empire, their habits, manners, customs, industries, etc., etc., and send out these films to other countries for propaganda and invite, in exchange, other countries like England and America to send out demonstrators to India with films showing their habits, customs, etc. This will lead to international fellowship and schools and colleges will be the best fields for this kind of work.

24. *Effect of the Kinema on the Public Mind.*—As pointed out in my pamphlet, the Kinema has a very evil effect on the mind of children by showing them highly sensational films. The effect on the public was inferred from the inauguration of motor dacoities in Calcutta, copied from motor handits on the screen. The kissing and embracing and other love demonstrations have a very pernicious effect on the public and grown up mind and impressionable boys. You have only to visit a downtown cinema to see how the lower classes of people gloat over scenes when there is kissing or embracing.

Japan has set a very good example in prohibiting all scenes where there is kissing or embracing or love demonstration.

I am fully aware of the difficulty in India. Here we have two communities, the Britishers and Indians, the standards of morality of whom differ. Take the example of kissing. A kiss by a husband or wife in public means nothing to an Englishman, it is a common everyday affair, but to an Indian it causes a shiver. It is against his laws of "Morality." If all kissing were dropped from cinema films, they will lose all charm for beauty or art for the Western people. My opinion is that it will have to be tolerated as a necessary evil, as other evils of civilization are.

The pity of it is that Indian actors are taking to imitating the western ideas of kissing and embracing in their own films. I have seen several Indian films being marred by Krishna kissing the Gopis in the most approved western style.

(d) I think that Censorship is inadequate because several scenes are allowed to pass because they do not offend the western ideals. Take the instances of several kinds of European dancing. They are very innocent in the western eye, but to Indians they are revolting. To prohibit them will be to take the "pep" out of most films. I realise the difficulty but I do not see a way out of it. It has to be tolerated as a necessary evil. We are not a homogenous people like the Japanese that we can prohibit kissing from films altogether.

(e) I do not think there has been an increase of crime but the morality of grown up boys visiting cinemas has suffered and if Indian actors continue to copy the worse traits of Western films the harm will increase.

29. *Classification of Films for Adults and Children.*—In America they do. I enclose two numbers of the "Educational Screen" in which all the films are classified as fit for exhibition to children, boys and adults. This is very interesting and helpful for parents who care for the morality of their children, but it is not practicable in India. Firstly, because the cinema going public in India is very small. Secondly, because educated people form a small minority of cinema audiences. Thirdly, it will be difficult to inform the Indian public, composed of so many different races and religions, about the right films. Fourthly, the cinema industry in India has not specialised to a very great extent and is in its infancy.

30. *Prohibiting Children.*—I am not in favour of prohibiting children altogether from cinemas. The cinema is a healthy amusement and has come to stay. We should not ignore it, but try to improve it as far as we can. A clause may be inserted that children under 10 or 12 will not be allowed in cinemas unless accompanied by guardians.

32. *Present system of Censorship.*—Is I think defective. There are Boards of Censorship in Calcutta and in Bombay. The standard of these two Boards differs. What may be objected to by one Board may be passed by another. I have an interesting case in point. In about the year 1922, I saw in Calcutta a film called "The Temple of Venus" or some such title. I considered it highly objectionable. Venus appears in such a thin and flimsy dress as to seem almost naked and twice appeared nearly naked while bathing. I at once wrote to the Censor enquiring how such an indecent film could be allowed to be exhibited. He went and saw it and thought that it was not fit for exhibition, but he could not do anything as the film had been passed by Bombay Censorship Board. I then wrote to the Bombay Board asking them how they could have passed such a film. It appears that the Bombay agent of Messrs. Madan came to know of this letter and wrote to Calcutta that I had complained about that film and Mr. Rustomji of the Calcutta office, with whom I had dealings, became wrath with me and put me to very great loss because I had dared to draw the Censor's attention to damage one of his films.

33. *The Problem of Censorship.*—In India is very complicated. What standard is the Censor to place before himself while judging—Western or eastern? If he is too puritanic it ruins the industry in the eyes of the western people.

Besides, where are you going to begin the censorship? If from now, what about the millions of films that are already on the market in India? Are they all to be recensored? This would be impossible? The problem of Censorship is very carefully dealt with in the report of the evidence before the Cinema Commission enquiry instituted by the National Council on Public Morals in England. I hope the Committee has got a copy of this report. It is very useful and covers most of the questions on which the present Committee is seeking evidence.

If the Committee has not this report, I shall be glad to lend it my copy.

**Oral Evidence of Mr. KARAMCHAND BULCHAND, Director,  
"Educational Kinematograph," Hyderabad, Sind, on Tuesday,  
the 22nd November 1927.**

*Chairman :* We are very glad to have you here, Mr. Bulchand. You seem to have had some experience in this cinema industry. Where do you live?

A. I am the Headmaster of a High School in Hyderabad, Sind. I was there as Headmaster for about 15 years when I realised the potentialities of the kinematograph as an instrument of instruction and I thought the best way to popularise my idea would be to get educational pictures and try to show them through educational authorities. I had some money to invest and I thought that it would be the right way to do it. So I had my own men, operators, etc., and I went about showing educational pictures to schools. Later on I took to war work

and later still, to health and agriculture propaganda work. I stopped my activities in 1923 and reverted back to my position as Headmaster because I thought the times were not ripe for that work.

**Q.** How many years were you at it?

**A.** For about 7 years from 1915-1923. I gave up my position as Headmaster. In fact, I took leave and went about India showing war films specially during the war time. The Publicity and Propaganda Committees of the Government helped me a great deal and I was able to do a good deal of work. I got a medal for voluntary war work from His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief, and later on after the war I took to health, agriculture and industry propaganda pictures.

**Q.** You have handed to us a copy of the pamphlet.

**A.** That was written about some 12 years ago.

**Q.** You refer in your statement to the questionnaire which was issued to all schools in England. Have you got that with you?

**A.** I have not got it. I think I should be able to hunt it up. In fact I study all the literature on educational cinematograph and I think I could get it from the Educational Screen or other magazines. I remember about 40 questions were put to all the schools and answers were invited and I thought it would be a very interesting thing. I might suggest a few questions on that line which might be circulated to all the schools, particularly in places where there are cinemas to ascertain what effect cinematograph has on the child mind, and that will be interesting.

**Q.** You say information was collected. Was any report issued on that information?

**A.** Yes a brief one. It was collected by some private authorities, but I may be able to hunt up that questionnaire and give you a copy because I used to preserve all the educational journals. I shall try.

**Q.** I wish you to try and get it. In the meanwhile we will also make enquiries. There is another thing which you mention, which we have not been able to get here.

**A.** The report of the Cinema Commission, the National Council of Public Morals in England? I have got a copy of it.

**Q.** What year was that?

**A.** 1917. That covers exactly all the questionnaire that you are having here.

**Q.** It is rather ancient?

**A.** No. Some of the evidence they have collected from school children and educationists holds good even to-day. (Witness handed in a copy of the report which was returned to him later).

**Mr. Neogy :** You keep yourself in touch with the activities in other parts of the world?

**A.** Of course, that has been my hobby for about 15 years.

**Chairman :** Where is this published? (Educational Screen).

**A.** In America. They are miles ahead in this line specially of what England is doing.

**Colonel Crawford :** Do you know anything of the German activities in this line?

**A.** No.

**Chairman :** They say the German educational films are very good.

**A.** I have no idea.

**Q.** Have you travelled in the west?

**A.** No.

**Q.** I suppose you advocate very strongly that these educational and public health propaganda films should be manufactured in this country, or should be largely used for educating the people?



A. I think the proper thing would be to get the right sort of film from America and from England and see how far they can become popular, and how far they can be utilised. Of course, certain parts may be added. For instance, in the case of the fly film, showing how the fly spreads disease. The scientific portion of it I cut out from foreign films: how the fly germinates, etc. That cannot be done in any laboratory here, but I added to it the Indian surrounding, and that is just the right way to do. We have got studios to reproduce the several activities which we would like to see on the screen.

Q. We see films already produced in that direction, and you would supplement them in order to suit Indian conditions.

A. Yes.

Q. For that purpose there must be a studio established in India?

A. Yes.

Q. And do you think that Government should do it?

A. So far as I know of the Government of India and of the Government of Bombay, I think there is too much of red-tapeism to go ahead and do this sort of thing.

Q. You think they should do it?

A. Yes, if they can be guided properly by experts.

Q. I mean people like you should lay emphasis on this thing?

A. I think that they should be for educational purposes.

Q. Both for the youth and for the masses?

A. Yes. And it would be economical. I know the Health Departments of Bengal and the U. P. were very keen on the use of the cinema for health propaganda and they were asking for films. If a central bureau could supply the films as they do in England and America, they should have a big library of health, agriculture and educational films and lend them out free to such schools and colleges as have cinema machines. They should send them out all over India.

Q. You will have as it were a visual instruction campaign started throughout the country?

A. Yes, from a central position. As it is, the Governments are frittering away their energies. The Bombay Government have their own propaganda people. The U.P. Government have 30 or 40 people with magic lanterns going round. The magic lantern has lost its novelty and it does not go down, and the cinema should take its place. The Governments have propaganda funds and all these could be combined in a central bureau.

Q. You think then that all the provincial Governments should pool their resources together and leave it to a central authority to produce the required films?

A. To collect and to supplement. The first thing would be to collect.

Q. For instance, take a man in Madras. He hardly sees what is happening in the Punjab and similarly the man in the Punjab hardly sees anything of Madras. So that there is plenty of opportunity for popularising conditions in different provinces to other provinces.

A. I know in America for propaganda purposes they have what is called "See America First" Series. If we have a thing like "See India First" it would be a very good thing for our school children.

Q. Primarily you want it for India?

A. Yes, because we do not know our India properly. It is a continent and we do not know what our neighbours are doing.

Q. And instead of each Government frittering away their resources and energies you want them to pool their resources?

A. Yes.

Q. You also believe in developing the Indian film industry for amusement purposes?

A. No. I have very strong opinions on it. I myself had to produce some films on Indian motherhood. I produced them in the Kohinoor studio. From

what I know of the Indian industry at present it is very disappointing. I had personal knowledge of the industry 5 years ago, but since then I have been seeing the films they are producing. Only last night I went to see the latest film. I saw it at the Globe; and I find they have not progressed an inch.

*Q.* Did you see "Pleasure Mad"?

*A.* No, Sir. It was a film about Hiraji, how they manage things in Native States.

*Q.* Have you seen "Sacrifice"?

*A.* No, Sir. I have seen "The Light of Asia." That was highly spoken of but I did not think much of it.

*Q.* Of course compared with a Western film.

*A.* It is a gorgeous film but there is no technique or imagination about it.

*Q.* I suppose you have not seen the studios in Bombay for the last 5 years?

*A.* Yes, I paid a visit twice after that to two studios but I saw the conditions were practically the same. They have no idea of modern requirements.

*Q.* Have you seen the Kohinoor Film Company? Do you know Mr. Deware?

*A.* No I knew the proprietor very well. My film was the first they produced.

*Q.* They have introduced improvements since then.

*A.* But I have seen the latest films here but they cannot approach anywhere near the American standard.

*Q.* But I believe they are showing signs of improvement. One of the men has been to America and other places and has been trying to do his bit. What do you think should be done in order to improve the conditions? I think you suggest that experts should be sent for and our students sent there for training. You believe in that?

*A.* I do believe in that; but why support an industry which is not really doing very much. In fact it is going down as far as I can see.

*Q.* But don't you believe there is plenty of scope for producing Indian films and isn't the cinema getting popular with the Indian public?

*A.* With a certain class of the Indian public.

*Q.* But they form the bulk of the people.

*A.* But their taste is getting vitiated. I have certain charges to make against Indian films. If you go and see these films for yourself they are copying western methods, the way of kissing, for instance, in the approved Western style; and embracing and fighting—all these things which are the worst features of Western films.

*Q.* Don't you think a certain amount of excitement is needed? People don't go to the cinema for instruction.

*A.* The cinema proprietors dance to the tune which their patrons call.

*Q.* I mean when a man goes after a hard day's work he does not want to see a grave teacher teaching his class.

*A.* Certainly not, Sir, but it should be a healthy kind of amusement.

*Q.* Therefore it requires help and guidance?

*A.* But they are borrowing some of the worst features of Western films. That is what I consider dangerous.

*Q.* And what do you think should be done? You cannot prevent people from going to cinemas, it would be cruel?

*A.* Yes, I think it is the best amusement we can give to poor people; it is the cheapest and best.

*Q.* And it diverts them from drink?

*A.* I cannot say that. It may do that in England but our people I don't think go in much for that. But anyway it is doing harm to the masses because it emphasises the worst portion of the Western films. The directors have not yet grasped how Indian nationality should be brought out. Some religious films

I have seen of the God Krishna kissing the Gopis in the most approved Western style and embracing them. It was a most disgusting sight.

Q. But I believe they show it in a very hidden way. It is not so bad as in Western films.

A. But I wish you could come and hear the screeches and howls of the audience when this kissing is going on.

Q. What you call screeches may be appreciation of the humour of the situation.

A. Yes they do appreciate that.

Mr. Coalman : Do you think that it tends to irreverence?

A. Yes! it tends to lower the sanctity of the whole thing. They are using the Puranas and the sacred scriptures to pander to the lower tastes of the mob. I consider that a very dangerous tendency in the Indian film.

Chairman : Therefore the industry requires some healthy guidance?

A. Yes. They are now taking to imitating Western dramas, stories taken from the West but put in Indian garb. But it does not go off. You can see for yourself how unskilled are the hands that write the scenarios. There are no scenario writers. You have only to see these pictures to see how Western ideas are being copied, but unsuccessfully. I consider the cinema to be a necessary evil.

Q. You are not for preventing any young man from leading a Western life.

A. But I would not imitate certain Western methods, for example, the manner of dancing among Westerners.

Q. But I believe young Indians are now taking to dancing, both girls and boys. In Bombay if you go to the Willingdon Club you will see many of them.

A. I have seen some films of dancing which were revolting.

Mr. Green : I know many Indian ladies who dance. I have danced with some myself.

A. Parsis.

Q. Parsis as well as some Hindus.

A. I can only say I am surprised to hear it. At any rate I find some of these dancing films have a very demoralising effect upon our boys.

Chairman : It is no longer a question of educated or uneducated. It is a question of youth. It is youth, even the so-called educated youth, that get impressed with these ideas.

A. As I have said in my statement, I asked my 7th standard boys what was their ambition in life and 5 boys said " to be Eddie Polo "!

Q. Surely you think that some spirit of adventure is needed in the country?

A. Yes, but their whole mind is distracted with these things.

Q. 5 boys out of how many?

A. Out of 40, but 20 of them don't go to the cinema at all.

Q. Don't you think the Indian is lacking in the spirit of adventure?—I wish we had a little more of that spirit.

A. No, I don't think so.

Q. I quite agree that we don't want criminal adventure; but adventure of the spirit is needed.

A. Another point is the love demonstrations, they have a very dangerous effect on boys.

Q. What do you mean by love demonstrations?

A. Kissing, embracing, dancing and things of that kind.

Q. Would you prevent Indians from going to the dancing halls?

A. I would prevent my son from going because our surroundings, our circumstances are altogether different. Why import these ideas? I don't think it is desirable.

Q. Do you believe as a teacher that the more familiar you make people with certain aspects of life, the less they begin to like them?

A. I have yet to learn that.

Q. What is your solution for this state of things?

A. I believe that by specially selected films we should make the cinema very popular among school children.

Q. You don't expect business people to do it?

A. No, but the Government can do it. When Government have educational films I wouldn't mind giving them one complete show containing films of the most approved type, educational films with a sugar coating of course. One point I wish to impress. Whenever I showed my educational films if the children knew a comic was coming all the effect was lost. They kept asking when the comic was coming and would not see the educational film. They should be distinctly told that the educational demonstration is purely an educational lesson. At the end of 3 or 4 such demonstrations we might have a healthy comic programme to give them as a recreation.

Q. I suppose these educational films must have some sort of amusement side to them?

A. No, I would exclude that rigidly.

Q. But there must be some sort of plot behind it. Supposing you want to tell them about agricultural methods, do you mean you will merely show them agricultural methods?

A. Yes, to the school children; for the mob it would be different.

Q. I have seen educational films produced in Germany. They generally couple it with a plot or a story so as to make the film attractive; otherwise the film does not draw. The people go to sleep over it.

A. Yes, Sir. For example I was showing the manufacture of soap in the schools; that is produced by the Ford Company. There the child asks "Where does soap grow, on what tree?" The mother then takes the child to the factory and takes her through the factory. Sometimes quite a humorous turn is given—somebody steals something and so on.

Q. So you believe in that?

A. That would be all right but I wouldn't go beyond that.

Q. You must make your film attractive, not merely educational?

A. Yes.

Q. Which requires a certain amount of skill?

A. Yes and it needs an educationist to do it.

Q. You have read the Panchtantram. Some sort of combination like that is needed. Every moral must be conveyed in the shape of a story and they get more and more complicated as you go on.

A. Yes.

Q. You don't think Indian pictures have any commercial value in a Western market?

A. Not unless they rise very much higher in artistic value.

Q. You think some greater effort should be put forth either by the public or by private citizens? In order to improve the quality of the pictures produced here?

A. Yes. Of course there is plenty of scope for educational pictures—for example, the customs and manners of this country.

Q. That would not be a paying proposition. That is more for propaganda purposes. I am asking whether the industry in its aspect as an amusement does not require great effort to improve it.

A. Yes, it does.

Q. Do you think the Government should do anything in that direction?

A. No, Sir. It should be left to private agency.

Q. Not even indirectly.

A. No because anything touched by Government becomes suspicious.

Q. Surely not if they protect an industry? They have protected the steel industry. People do not get suspicious because the Government aid the steel industry.

A. Here is a question of recreation and propaganda, where every story manufactured by the Government would be looked upon with suspicion.

Q. I do not mean that way. Some sort of help to get raw materials cheaper for instance?

A. Yes that would be all right.

Q. And making it difficult to get foreign films?

A. No Sir, the foreign films keep a standard of excellence before us.

Q. But they compete with Indian films.

A. We should not shut out excellence just because they compete with our films.

Q. They do it in England.

A. But they don't accept the kind of films we do here.

Q. Probably they may be better than ourselves but still they have their national industry for which they think some such protection is needed as a quota system.

A. I have not thought of that. I would myself prefer the American films.

Q. Notwithstanding the faults you find in them?

A. There are many faults. Those we have to tolerate as a necessary evil.

Q. You would not interfere with it?

A. I would not as far as I can because the Americans are doing a good deal to improve their own films.

Q. They form part of a necessary evil and they must be left untouched?

A. I would particularly ask you to see the reports that they issue— "fit for exhibition to children," "excellent", etc.

Q. Do you believe in certain shows being classified as for adults?

A. I do not think the industry has grown so much in India yet.

Q. Now take the foreign films.

A. Yes, I appreciate it very much because it will help me to select the very best films.

Q. You think some should be marked only for adults.

A. That is what they do. They have remarks against each film such as "excellent for so and so" and if I were to make a selection of films for a programme I would simply take up one of these lists. (Gives copy of "Educational Screen" where each film is marked and classified for "adults", "boys" and "children".)

Q. You advocate a central film library, as well as studios for production; and you also believe in getting experts to train the people here and sending students abroad in order to learn the technique. You think the Government should take steps in that direction?

A. Yes.

Q. In answer to question No. 22 you think that any participation in that policy will be injurious to the Indian industry.

A. Yes; I mean Imperial preference because I have seen many English films. The last one I saw was "Lady Hamilton" about Lord Nelson's life. That was a good film taken as an historical lesson if it were pre-

pared for school children; but there was no humour in it. We sat like statues and looked on.

*Mr. Green:* Are you quite certain it was a British film? I saw one also about Nelson recently which I think was German or foreign.

*A.* My impression is that it was British. They did not write very prominently there but I thought it was an English film.

*Chairman:* Anyway you think they are not attractive enough as an amusement.

*A.* No!

*Q.* And you think it is better to leave it to private competition?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* You don't believe in giving preference to Indian films either?

*A.* Not unless they deserve it.

*Q.* You think they should compete on equal terms?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* You think the Indian can compete on those terms?

*A.* I believe they may, but as a matter of fact the industry is in the hands of people who have no foresight; they do not look ahead.

*Q.* That may be so, but others have not come forward. Why is that so?

*A.* It is very unfortunate that people have not come forward but at present it is in the hands of people who have no imagination.

*Q.* Therefore it is up to us to help them. You don't want to discourage those who have come forward already?

*A.* No I would rather set up . . .

*Q.* Who is to set up? You don't believe in Government aid. You want to leave it to private effort and private effort does not come forward although there is a demand.

*A.* We have lowered the taste of the public to such an extent that they don't know what a good picture is.

*Q.* But how are you going to improve it? I quite recognise that the industry is not in ambitious hands but still they are doing something in that direction while others are keeping quiet. According to you somebody else should take it up. That somebody else does not take it up. Others in the meanwhile are doing it and are finding amusement for the poor. Is it not our duty to help them?

*A.* Yes, certainly.

*Q.* You therefore want to help them in technique?

*A.* Certainly to that extent.

*Q.* You don't believe in giving any preference to Indian films?

*A.* No.

*Q.* And so far as educational purposes are concerned, bringing the Empire together, understanding each other better and so on, you say that should be left to each Government to do what it can in that way.

*A.* But there can be an exchange in propaganda work. For instance Australia can send us their films and we can send our films to Australia. I was getting several films from America all free from the Baby Welfare centres.

*Q.* You don't want any legislative or administrative action to be taken in that direction?

*A.* No.

*Q.* Now in your answer to 22 (c) you think the standard of British films is not high and it cannot set itself up as a standard or model for Indian production. Have you seen many British films?

*A.* I have.

*Q.* They are not going to improve the standard of Indian films?

*A.* No.

*Q.* You say Japan has set a very good example in prohibiting kissing and embracing on the screen.

*A.* Yes I have read somewhere that they prohibit all kissing and embracing in any film. But the point could be easily ascertained.

*Mr. Coatsman:* I have read it too.

*Chairman:* Can you give us the reference to any such prohibition?

*A.* No I think it can be easily enquired about from the Japanese Government.

*Q.* So you don't think anything is necessary? You think the existing censorship is adequate?

*A.* I will give an instance of one film, "The Temple of Venus" which I saw in Calcutta. In it was the figure of a lady almost nude and the dress was so thin that you could see the private parts. I complained to the Censor "How is it you passed this film; it is a disgrace that such a film should be shown in Calcutta". He said he could not do anything as the Bombay Censor had passed it. Then I wrote to the Bombay Censor. Somehow he showed my letter to Madan and Madan was very wrath with me and cut off all dealings with me. There is danger in complaining.

*Mr. Green:* Did you get no answer from the Bombay Board?

*A.* No I did not get an answer. I wrote to them but did not get an answer.

*Q.* You wrote officially to the Board and the Board had not the courtesy to reply.

*A.* I do not remember receiving a reply. I told them there was that film which was objectionable and I wondered how it came to be passed.

*Q.* It is difficult to believe that they did not send you an answer.

*A.* It was in 1921 that I asked about that film because their standards are different.

*Chairman:* May I ask whether you have seen paintings and statues of Venus. What is your objection; why should you object to the films showing what statues and paintings do?

*A.* That is where our standards of morality differ from those of Europeans.

*Q.* You would prevent statues of Venus being exhibited in India.

*A.* If such a statue was given to my school as a present, I would prevent it's being seen. I may be a bit narrow-minded and conservative.

*Q.* Art does require sometimes these things. You don't believe in art?

*A.* Not to that extent. We have to put a limit somewhere.

*Q.* But after all the human form is a beautiful one?

*A.* Supposing the private parts could be just covered up, I wouldn't mind then.

*Q.* Anyway you don't want too much of it, that I can understand; but when you object to Venus being shown in that way; if it was intended to exhibit Venus then what is your objection?

*A.* I am looking at it from the Indian point of view.

*Q.* But you cannot say that Indians are not accustomed to nudity.

*A.* Not in public.

*Q.* What about your labourers in the field?

*A.* They do not exhibit themselves for allurement.

*Q.* I mean our ladies go and bathe in the river.

*A.* That is different. But if a man comes and watches at the bathing that you would object to it.

Q. Well, it is not considered good manners for you to go and stare; but all the same ladies do go to bathe in the river.

A. But you would object to a man standing and looking on. As a matter of fact we are prevented from exhibiting scenes at the bathing ghat at Kashi. That is objected to by Government.

Q. But don't you think you are attaching too much importance to this question of nudity?

A. Yes because I am a schoolmaster and know its effect upon school children.

Mr. Green: Just one question on that last point. I take it you don't object to nudity in itself. You object to the suggestion that may be caused by nudity or, still worse, by partial nudity?

A. Yes.

Q. That is your objection to a film like this one, "The Temple of Venus"?

A. Yes.

Q. It might possibly have been less offensive if the actress had been represented with nothing on at all rather than in a firmly dress?

A. I would think that more objectionable, if she were perfectly nude.

Q. Well, I will leave that point. You told the Chairman in some of your films you cut out parts of imported films, the education parts.

A. Yes.

Q. Did you buy those films outright? Has there been no difficulty about questions of copyright? Do you have to make any special arrangements?

A. I can cut out a film and insert certain portions of my own. There is no infringement of copyright. Most of these educational films have no copyright. They don't think much of them.

Q. I ask because there was a case recently in Bombay when a piece from a foreign film was taken over into an Indian film. There was immediately a police court proceeding which is still pending. I take it you make a very clear distinction between propaganda films for education, agricultural, medical purposes and films exhibited by the trade. You think there should be no connection between the two?

A. Yes.

Q. You naturally don't think that the trade is so broadminded as to risk losing part of their audience by inserting too much education?

A. Yes. I offered my educational films to some of these trade people to show for nothing and they wouldn't.

Q. Quite. They were frightened it would drive some of their audience away. That is to say, a man goes to the cinema to be amused and not to be instructed. You don't blame them?

A. Certainly not. I sympathise with them.

Q. I think we are probably very largely in sympathy with your views on propaganda films. As regards amusement films, are not you a little hard on Indian producers when you say that the films they have made tend to lower public taste. Isn't it possible that Indian producers, like producers in any other country, have, in order to pay their way, at any rate at the start to play down to the public taste?

A. Yes, but I happen to know some proprietors and producers and I have suggested to them better ideas. They would not take them because it would cost them more to produce. I have written out a scenario for "Nur Jehan". They liked the scenario very much but it would have meant overhauling all the dresses, because up to then only Hindu films had been produced.

Q. Do you think there could be another reason for that? We have it in evidence that some classes of Muhammadans think it improper to visit



the films, and certainly the ordinary audience which we have seen so far is composed mostly of non-Muhammadans, and therefore if you produce a film predominantly Muhammadan in outlook you might drive away some of your Hindu audience?

A. Yes, it is so. Because I produced a film called "Padmani", a Rajput drama, they would not have it because it offended the Muhammadan susceptibilities as it showed Alladin in a wrong position.

Q. I was very interested in what you said about the dangers of protecting industries. It has been suggested that if protection were raised to the extent of even 10 times more, it would give Indian producers much greater scope, but you think that it would create artificial protection and cause the industry to stagnate?

A. Yes, because then they will have the whole field to themselves, and there will be no competition.

Q. If they had a wider scope for more theatres, to show their films because of high protection, do you think they would be able to produce a better class of films?

A. My impression is that the cinema-going audience is very limited. Only in large towns do these cinemas make some money, but in smaller towns having a population of 60,000 or less, the cinemas are not doing well and unless they show a lot of beating, warlike and other vulgar scenes it is quite impossible for them to draw audiences. As a matter of fact I went to see a film last night and I went into the pit and sat with the people. I asked them if they liked that particular film. They said that they did not like it because there was no fighting in it. Then I asked them what films they particularly liked. They said that they liked only those films which contained love scenes, beating and fighting. Unless the cinemas can pander to those tastes, they are bound to go down.

Q. You mentioned Hyderabad, Sind. I gathered from you that there is a very small audience there?

A. Yes, there are only two cinemas, one catering for dramas and the other catering for illiterate and low class people and showing serials. The latter theatre which shows serials is flourishing, and the other theatre which is showing dramas is about to close its doors.

Q. We were told that originally the taste of the labouring classes was for serials and wild west films and the same class of films is apparently popular in Hyderabad now. We were also told that the Bombay illiterate audience had grown out of that now. We were also told that the same thing happened in America some years ago and they would not show the wild west films there now. So, is it not possible that the taste of the people will improve gradually?

A. I think that in big towns like Bombay, Calcutta and Karachi there are special cinemas which cater for special tastes, and these labourers and illiterate people know where to go to. They would not go to the Palace theatre for instance even if they are asked to go free.

Q. Won't they go and see a play produced in the Bombay studios?

A. Formerly they used to go because they were mostly religious plays, and the name of religion charmed them.

Q. Take the social dramas which they produce now, won't these labourers go and see them here?

A. This is only a recent departure. I saw only one social drama, and I did not find much audience here.

Q. I see that you appreciate just as much as any censor the new difficulty of the problem that there are different stages of civilization and different kinds of civilization, and I take it that your general conclusion is that there is no solution except possibly the gradual education of the audience. On the other hand, you are frightened that that education may introduce undesirable features, because you said you would not take your own son to see some of the films. If you carry that objection suffi-

ciently far, should you not advocate total prohibition of such films, that is to say, would you not advocate very much more rigorous censorship than at present?

A. In India the conditions are altogether different from those in other countries. Here we have got the educated audience quite apart from the uneducated audience. Now these educated audiences can see things with a true perspective, they can appreciate some of the western methods, loving, kissing and so forth. But we cannot prevent the uneducated audience from going and seeing such scenes, nor is the censor to be blamed for passing such films. If you cut out such parts as loving and kissing, just as Japan cuts them out, then the whole industry will go down, because 90 per cent. of the people would not care to go to the cinemas. Such a step would ruin the industry; therefore I consider them a necessary evil.

*Colonel Crawford:* I am very interested in your paper and in your efforts to undertake educational film work. Have you any idea whether work of that nature is a commercially paying proposition?

A. No, Sir, it is not. I left it because I suffered heavily.

Q. If it is to be done, would you place visual instruction of that nature ahead of primary education?

A. Yes, Sir, I would.

Q. Therefore, if you had a limited sum of money to spend on education, you would definitely allot a major portion of it for visual instruction.

A. Yes, I remember to have asked the Director of Public Instruction in Bengal to allow me to show a certain number of educational films to school children. He said, "No, first I would raise the pay of the school masters and then give money for such luxuries." I believe that the cinema does educate far more effectively than the literary education which is given to children. The cinema speaks in universal language to the masses, and there is really no better or more effective method of giving education than by means of the cinema.

Q. I understand you have not yet been to the west. But do you consider that the western films shown here are representing the western life as it is to-day?

A. No, they exaggerate the western life a little.

Q. Does the majority of the audience take it as truly representative of western life?

A. I shall divide the audience into two classes, the educated and the illiterate. The illiterate audience have absolutely no idea. They only go to the cinema to see "Maramari," love scenes and so forth, and they do not care a jot for the plot, while the educated people do care for the plot, but it depends upon their level of education, and some of them do appreciate those films at their proper value.

Q. Do you think the western films are liable to misrepresent western life?

A. Several Europeans do think like that. I may just give you one instance. I had a little comic in which two little children who were lying side by side somehow began to quarrel. While they were quarrelling their two mothers came up and began to quarrel between themselves, and you know when vulgar mothers quarrel they begin to pull each other's hair and so on. That part of the film I was showing to Indian audiences to show that very often parents also quarrelled over the little children's affairs. There were objections raised by 5 or 6 Europeans on the ground that that scene represented European ladies quarrelling, and that lowered the European in the eyes of the Indian.

*Mr. Green:* Did they object to the actual quarrelling or to the method?

A. They objected to the actual quarrelling. It was of course exaggerated a little, and some of the Europeans said that they did not want the Indians to be shown the worse side of the western character. I found some of

the Europeans were rather touchy about it, and some of them did not like me to show that part of the film, because they thought it lowered the European in the eyes of the Indian.

*Chairman:* What is your opinion about it?

A. My opinion is that human nature is the same everywhere, but those people were too touchy over it. I think most of the educated people appreciate European films and judge them at their true value, but the illiterate people do not and cannot understand western films.

Q. Do you think there is any misrepresentation of Indian life in western films?

A. In American films the Indian is usually represented as a mystic telling fortunes and performing hypnotism and so on, which is not true. But those films are produced not for Indian audiences, but for American audiences. I would not object to it, because we have nothing to do with it. We can only laugh at it.

Q. Don't you think it is definitely harmful to India?

A. That depends upon how much the Indians care to have the American opinion on their side, and that can best be done by propaganda films. We could win the American people by showing them our better side. It depends upon the Government to do that.

Q. With regard to your answer to No. 25, do you consider that the differences in social customs and outlook between the west and the east necessitates special consideration in the censorship of films in this country?

A. Do you mean we should have special censors to censor Indian customs and distinguish them from European customs? If that is so, I don't think we shall be able to distinguish western and eastern customs in these films. The censor cannot do that. As a matter of fact, the audiences are mixed, and the subjects have to be taken together. We cannot separate them at all. We cannot say that a particular film is to be shown only to Indians or only to Europeans or that it should not be shown to illiterate people. That is not possible.

Q. Generally in your opinion we cannot get the censors to draw any difference on a line like that?

A. I don't blame the censors for it.

Q. You say there are cinemas in Hyderabad, Sind?

A. There were three, but one is closed down.

*Chairman:* Do you know the province of Sind well? Is there any other place where there are cinemas?

A. I know the province well. There are small cinemas in Sukkur and Shikarpur, but they are not worth considering.

*Colonel Crauford:* What type of films are they showing in Hyderabad? Are they of the same type as are shown in Karachi?

A. No, Sir, after the films have been shown in Karachi, they are sent to the mofussil like Hyderabad with scratches on, I mean what we call "rainy" films are generally sent to the mofussil.

Q. The same films are shown very much later and therefore they are old and worn out?

A. Yes.

Q. Somebody told us that quite a different sort of film is brought into the country to be sent to the mofussil, what they call old junk?

A. Formerly it used to be done like that; uncensored films used to be imported because there was no proper supervision in Hyderabad, and old junk used to be sent.

Q. So your only complaint is that the films are somewhat worn out and damaged?

A. Yes.

**Mr. Neogy:** Mr. Bulchand, you made a present of a valuable set of films to the Bombay Government?

**A.** Yes, I presented them with 90,000 feet of films, and they have not used them yet.

**Q.** Have you kept yourself in touch with them to find out what they are doing with those films?

**A.** I asked Mr. Toro, the gentleman who is responsible for visual instruction as to what they are going to do with those films. He said that the then Director of Public Instruction was not very keen on using them, and so the films are lying idle, and it pained me very much to see so many of my educational films lying idle. Perhaps after 2 years they will become quite useless. I wanted to make a present of them to the G. I. P. Railway or to the E. B. Railway, because they are showing educational films.

**Q.** Have you seen the railway publicity films?

**A.** No, but I had proposed to them that they should have educational propaganda by means of films about ten years ago, and it has taken them 10 years to give effect to my proposal.

**Q.** I find your services were availed of by the United Provinces and Bengal Governments, whereas they were not availed of by the Bombay Government in this matter?

**A.** The Bombay Government perhaps did not want to avail themselves of my services.

**Q.** Have you made any proposal to the Bombay Government recently, after Education has been transferred to the Ministers, on the subject of educational films?

**A.** No, I have never done that.

**Q.** You have some experience of the production of Indian films and you said you produced a film called "Indian Motherhood" in one of the studios in Bombay. Do you think there is absolutely no scope for the improvement of those studios which are run by private agencies?

**A.** I happen to know some of the proprietors very intimately. One of them is a merchant dealing in gold thread. Whenever I made any suggestions to him he turned them down ruthlessly.

**Q.** Supposing you have to manufacture some more educational films. Would you have any objection to utilising the present resources of the studios or you would require separate studios?

**A.** I would utilise the present ones.

**Q.** Now coming to the manufacture of educational films, you say you would certainly advocate Government doing it. But would you insist on the Government having their own studio for the manufacture of educational films or would it suit you if the Government were to entrust the work to some private agencies, giving them sufficient expert advice by their own men like the educational authorities, medical authorities and so forth. What I mean is, do you favour the idea of a Government studio for producing educational films or would you want Government to aid private agencies?

**A.** I would favour Government themselves producing educational films.

**Q.** Do you think that the outlook of the different Educational Ministers might differ in regard to this matter and if a central authority were set up for the purpose of producing educational films, can you, from your experience as an educational officer, say that every educational film produced by that central authority would satisfy every educational authority all over India?

**A.** No, Sir. That will be very difficult, because India is a big continent, and the customs, manners and habits of the different provinces differ very materially. As a matter of fact, the film "Indian Motherhood" which

was produced in Bombay was not liked by the Calcutta people. Some of them said that it was a foreign film, because the dress of the Indian mother was different from the dress worn by the mother in Bengal. They said that that film did not come up to their standard.

*Chairman:* Do you think there is much substance in it? Don't you think that such views will gradually disappear when they come to know each other better?

A. I cannot say, but it will take time.

Q. Is it a factor to be taken into account in producing films?

A. Yes, because these films have to be shown to illiterate masses, and they have not yet come up to our standard.

Q. Is it a matter of substance that as an educational officer you would take note of in producing films, and would you say that each province should produce its own films?

A. If I am going to show a film for the Punjab or United Provinces audience, I would try as far as possible to give them a film which would contain scenes from the Punjab or United Provinces only. I would show them Punjab and United Provinces customs, dress and other things. For example, in the scene of a mother giving birth to a babe in Bombay the customs are altogether different from those in Punjab or United Provinces from Bombay. Therefore, I say that if I were taking a film to be shown to Punjab ladies, I would produce one containing Punjabi manners and customs.

Q. Would you not then add to the cost?

A. It may add to the cost of production of the film, but it will not add to the cost of developing. My camera man may have to go to the Punjab to take scenes under the guidance of the Health Department, and after taking the scenes the film might be sent to Simla for development and finishing. That is my idea.

*Mr. Neogy:* Therefore I suppose you would prefer provincial agencies for producing films for separate provinces?

A. Government should have a hand in it.

Q. Now, you have been to many Indian provinces. You find that the agricultural implements differ in shape and character. Supposing you were asked to produce some films about agricultural implements. Do you think the film depicting the implements which are used in the Punjab would appeal to agriculturists in Bengal where they are using a different type of agricultural implements?

A. I had several films on agriculture which I was showing. One of them showed how much field a tractor could plough in a day. But what struck the people most was the pictures about cows in America. They could not believe that they were real cows, and when I told them that they were real cows, people could not believe it.

Q. Certain types of things which are not indigenous might also be helpful?

A. It will keep before the people an ideal.

Q. But apart from that, you would have provincial agencies conforming to provincial tastes as far as possible?

A. So far as film production is concerned, it must be under the direction of the educational authorities or medical health department of the different provinces, but developing the scene might be done in the central studio.

Q. I am in great sympathy with your views about the standard of Indian life shown in Indian films, particularly in regard to religious films. Now, there are certain kinds of scenes which are almost inevitable in western films. Now, I take it that you would object to those scenes being repeated

in Indian films because they are not true scenes as far as India is concerned. Would you advocate the adoption of a different standard of censorship for the purpose of seeing that Indian standards are kept undefiled as it were? To what sort of agency would you look for bringing this about?

A. I should like cultured people to take an interest in this industry. For instance, I would pay very much more to a scenario writer or to a director. As a matter of fact, our Indian producing companies do not have real directors. They allow the actors to act as they like.

Q. Would you suggest any controlling authority, an outside agency to inspect the scenarios and to judge them from the Indian point of view, to see that there is no western element introduced in Indian films?

A. Yes. It would certainly be very good to have a board composed of artists and literary men, educational authorities and so on.

Q. You said that there are agencies in America which supply educational films free of cost? Could you get the films for the mere asking? Could you please let us have a list of such agencies for the use of the Committee?

A. There are different advertising firms, and I had a list of them. They give the educational films free of cost in America, but as far as India is concerned, they will send the film only to approved authorities and to special bodies provided the firms were assured of certain audiences. I will try and send you a list of those firms.

Mr. Chairman: In your answer to No. 5 you mention about violent kissing by Lord Krishna and so on. Do you think the Indian audiences would prefer the Indian films to be treated in this western fashion instead of in a purely Hindu style?

A. The intelligent Hindu would certainly resent Lord Krishna kissing, but the lower classes and uncultured Hindus do not see that difference. They think only of kissing and they don't think that it would lower the religious ideals.

Chairman: Is not the uneducated Hindu more religious than the educated Hindu?

A. In a certain sense.

Mr. Chairman: Do you think this desire for western treatment and western themes has gone so far as to destroy the inborn preference for Indian scenes treated in a purely Indian way?

A. Certainly it has, and it is lowering the taste of the people.

Q. Do you think if Indian pictures were treated entirely in an Indian way, they would attract the audiences?

A. They will fall flat.

Q. Would there be any chance of their gradually winning approval?

A. I believe that the taste of the people has gone so low that they would not appreciate such kind of pictures.

Q. You talk of helping the industry by means of laboratories and so on, and you say that Government ought to help. Do you mean the Government of India or the Provincial Governments ought to help?

A. I mean the Government of India.

Q. Suppose the Government of India were to start a really first class studio and bring out experts and so on. Where should they work it? Would there not be provincial jealousy?

A. The studio may be located in one place, but I would send the camera men and other staff all over India to take scenes, and the films will be sent to the central studio for developing and printing. India is favoured with such excellent sun and natural beauty all over the country, facilities that you do not have in England.

Q. But a highly expert American witness told us that the Indian sunlight during certain hours of the day had no value. And this was confirmed by Indian photographers too. I was just wondering if these considerations were present to your mind. You see the studio must be located somewhere and if it is located in Bombay, that is a premium for the Bombay producers.

A. Not necessarily, unless it be for actors and others. I believe in outdoor work for educational purposes.

Q. I want to bring these difficulties to your notice. And reading through your written statement, your whole note really comes to this that the best way of introducing Government help is for certain provincial departments of education, agriculture, and so on, to take to showing films and thereby encouraging the production of films. That is really your scheme.

A. Yes.

Q. On the whole you think that would possibly be the best way.

A. Certainly.

Q. When you were doing your educational propaganda work did the newspapers devote any attention to it?

A. Oh yes.

Q. Sympathetic?

A. Very. I have a collection of the newspaper notices.

Q. Do you ever write articles for the newspapers?

A. Yes, Sir.

Q. Do they take them?

A. They do.

Q. What newspaper?

A. I am now specialising in the use of the gramophone in education and they are taking it very well—"The Times of India," and the "Statesman."

Q. Have you ever tried the "Bombay Chronicle," or the "Indian Daily Mail," or the "Amrita Bazar Patrika"?

A. No. I only write to the "Statesman" and the "Times of India."

Q. Would these Indian newspapers take them, do you think, if you wrote to them?

A. I think they might. They used to formerly. I will send you a collection of the notices taken by the newspapers. I have got a book of cuttings.

Q. Don't you think it would be an excellent thing to get these newspapers to print your news?

A. It would.

### **Written Statement of Mr. W. N. RICHARDSON, J.P., City Magistrate, Karachi, dated the 8th November 1927.**

2. (a) In the cinemas in Karachi films appeal equally to literate and illiterate Indians.

(b) Half literate, half illiterate.

(c) Very few except for children's matinees.

\* 3. Thrilling films.

4. Yes.

5. There are not too many in the market.

(a) Fairly.

(b) Yes.

(c) Yes, in cinemas which have an almost exclusive Indian clientele.

The popular one are (1) The birth of Krishna, (2) Kalia Mardan, (3) The Ramayan.

6. (a) A high class film would be more popular, but they are not manufactured.

(b) (1) historical and religious.

(2) pictures of wrestling, boxing, swimming, etc.

7. No. Comedies are most suitable.

9. No. The importation of good films is in the hands of a few firms.

11. None in Karachi.

12. In certain cinemas the entertainment tax is paid by the exhibitor. The tax should be reduced slightly.

14. No. There is no demand for such films.

16. I don't know.

21. No.

22. Yes, provided the pictures produced are of the same excellence and price as American films.

23. Government should arrange for the manufacture of films like the Pathé Gazette.

24. (a) No.

(b) No.

(c) Pictures that offend the religious susceptibilities of the people and those depicting political revolutions.

(d) Yes.

(e) No.

25. Some discrimination is necessary.

26. (a) Yes.

(b) they are very rare and I know of no recent film of this kind.

27. Film producers are careful not to misrepresent Western civilization but films representing Western life are often unintelligible to uneducated Indians. Wrong ideas are no doubt formed. There is no remedy for this.

(b) No.

28. (a) and (b) Yes. Since the censorship started such films have almost entirely disappeared.

29. Yes.

30. No.

31. Yes.

32. Yes.

33. A foddist would do more harm than good.

34. Provincial Boards are the best. There should be censoring officers in all large towns for local imports and topical films manufactured locally.

35. (a) Yes.

(b) In the opinion of cinema managers, this would be an ideal method.

36. (a) Yes. The only qualification required is common-sense.

(b) No.

37. (a) Yes.

(b) Yes.

38. Yes, e.g., "Vir Durgadas."

39. No.

40. No.

41. Great improvement.



42. An Advisory Board composed partly of persons interested in the trade should be appointed to assist the local censor. (See reply to Question 35 (b)).

43. (a) A strict control over imports and exports should be exercised.

(b) to prevent the import or export of revolutionary films (c) All films should be accompanied by a certificate that it has been passed by a Censor in the country of origin and certain countries being black-listed if necessary.

44. By going to cinemas and seeing the pictures.

45. (a) and (b) Yes.

**Oral Evidence of Mr. W. N. RICHARDSON, J.P., City Magistrate,  
Karachi, on Tuesday, the 22nd November 1927.**

*Chairman:* How long have you been City Magistrate in Karachi.

A. Since 1914—13 years.

Q. Mr. Cumming also was city magistrate?

A. Yes, for a year or so, just before me. He is city deputy collector.

Q. Do you belong to this province?

A. All my service has been in this province.

Q. Do you know the mofussil in Sind?

A. I have seen it all, but not recently.

Q. You have been in Karachi since 1914.

A. I have been 32 years in Karachi. I have seen all Sind, I have toured over all Sind.

Q. Do you go to the cinema much?

A. Yes, I go regularly, once a week. Practically every Saturday.

Q. Where do you go?

A. I go to different cinemas. The Capitol, the Palace, sometimes a cinema in the town.

Q. The Capitol and the Palace only exhibit western films.

A. Yes.

Q. You have seen Indian films there in the town?

A. Yes.

Q. You think there is a great demand for Indian films?

A. For a certain class of films with a religious bias there is a demand like "The Life of Buddha". A film of that kind, or anything with a religious tinge attached to it, appeals to Indians.

Q. Yes, that has been the evidence. I suppose you go very seldom to the town theatres?

A. Well it is my business to go. I am the licensing officer for all theatres and cinemas and play houses and it was my business to censor films before the Act was passed. I had to censor all films in Karachi.

Q. But I am told these cinemas are of recent growth here in the town.

A. We have five new cinemas. We had five old ones before the war, 3 of them being in the town.

Q. I notice you think there are not too many films in the market?

A. No, I don't think there are too many. From the enormous prices they demand I should imagine so—the greater the demand, the less the price.

Q. You think there are not too many. Is the programme changed only once a week?

A. No, twice a week.

Q. In these theatres, the Capitol and the Palace.

A. In all cinemas, they all change the programme twice a week.

Q. Did you like the Indian films which you saw?

A. Yes, I liked them.

Q. Of course, they are not of the technique of the western films.

A. No. For instance, in "The Life of Buddha" you have macadamised roads and crudities of that kind.

Q. Anachronisms—and that I believe was a western produced film.

A. Yes, it was shown first in London before it was shown here.

Q. You think there will be a great demand for Indian films if they are produced in the country?

A. I won't say there will be a great demand. There will be a demand. They cannot possibly produce films like those the American producers manufacture.

Q. Why not?

A. They have not got the training, nor the facilities for production.

Q. Supposing you give the training and the facilities.

A. Possibly in another 15 years.

Q. You do believe in the possibility of its growth?

A. In time. Of course, in time anything is possible.

Q. In another 15 or 20 years you might get a better class of pictures, to compete at any rate in some respects with the western production.

A. Possibly.

Q. You say there is no demand for educational films. What do you mean?

A. In the ordinary picture houses nobody will go to see educational films. No one wants to see how the silk worm is born. If you have educational films for people requiring education possibly there would be a demand.

Q. As a commercial proposition a trader is not likely to exhibit it, or wouldn't care to exhibit such a film.

A. No. If it is necessary to show such films it should be done by Government agency.

Q. The Government should certainly do education and propaganda themselves?

A. Yes. Like they do in Australia House in Kingsway. The films shown there give a picture of life in Australia.

Q. Government should undertake that?

A. Certainly, nobody else will.

Q. It will be highly useful in a country like this in order to carry information to the people?

A. Most useful. Take the Sukkur Barrage. Half the people in Sind have not seen it and have no idea what the Sukkur Barrage is. A film exhibiting the whole scope of the Barrage will convey a tremendous amount of public information to the people and create an enlightened interest.

Q. For that purpose do you advocate a government agency being created for producing films and circulating films of that sort?

A. Yes, I certainly do.

Q. It is essential.

A. Yes. If they want the Sukkur Barrage to be known or any other information conveyed to the public.

Q. To educate the people, for instance, in modern sanitary methods and other things? Everything can be conveyed to the people through the medium of the cinema?

A. Quite so.

Q. Then you advocate spending public money in that direction. You think it would be highly beneficial?

A. Yes, I do advocate that.

Q. I mean with your experience of the country do you think it necessary that the Government should embark upon such an undertaking?

A. Yes, to a certain extent. Not waste money—don't spend too much money on it.

Q. Of course there is such a vast population, you cannot spend too much.

A. Well, you have got the entertainment tax. Spend that.

Q. You think that should be earmarked for this purpose?

A. Some of it should be taken and used for a purpose like that.

Q. It is only Rs. 40,000 or Rs. 50,000 in Karachi, I understand.

A. Yes, but one film produced would go all round India.

Q. On the question of preference to films of any particular country, you say, provided the same excellence and the price can be secured there should be some preference shown to Empire films.

A. Yes, certainly.

Q. I suppose you would also couple it with this condition that so long as it does not compete with the Indian industry.

A. I would not couple it with that, whether it competes or not. If the British films are as good as the American films now being shown, I should say certainly British films every time. And if an Indian film can be produced which is as good as British films they ought to go side by side.

Q. Supposing it is a question of Indian films or British films?

A. The appeal of the one class is as great as that of the other.

Q. Which is the larger class? The larger class is the Indian?

A. Certainly.

Q. Would you advocate preference being shown to Indian films in certain ways?

A. For educational films, I said.

Q. In answer to 22 you speak of participating in the policy outlined by the Imperial Conference.

A. In that respect I would treat them equally. I would not give Indian films preference to the British films.

Q. Why not?

A. They stand on the same footing.

Q. Certainly not. Indian films stand on a better footing than British films.

A. I don't think so.

Q. In Britain wouldn't they attach a greater importance to British films than to Indian films?

A. On particular subjects I doubt if they would.

Q. But they do prefer British to American films.

A. Yes, that is true. But that stands on another footing.

Q. Do you think England is going to give the same importance to Indian films as to British films?

A. Commercially I think they would,—if they are of the same excellence—other things being equal.

Q. But of course you don't think India can produce films of equal excellence for some time to come. Britain may be able to do it in a shorter time than India.

A. And therefore if British films come in competition with Indian films, have the best films every time.

Q. Then how would you encourage the growth of Indian films?

A. Gradually.

Q. How gradually, if British films get a hold how would it come gradually? It will swamp the few Indian films.

A. If the Indian films are of the same standard there is plenty of scope.

Q. Where is the scope when you allow the field to be occupied by other films? Just as Britain complains of the American films, India will complain.

A. But India won't have the same cause for complaint, because they have not the means of creating films of equal excellence.

Q. But you cannot create an industry in a year. It will take 10 or 15 years.

A. Well after 15 years if they grumble and say they want protection, it will be time to take notice. But until they have created an industry it is no use complaining.

Q. But if you don't allow the industry to grow at all.

A. I would allow it to grow gradually but I would not encourage it in any way that would prevent British films coming in.

Q. You won't have any preference shown to Indian films when they come into competition with British films but you would give preference to British films when they come into competition with foreign films or Indian films?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think that such attitude will be popular with the Indian public?

A. I am quite sure it won't be.

Q. You think the films now shown are fairly satisfactory and you have no reason to complain about the effects produced by the films?

A. No, there is not much to complain of.

Q. In your answer to Question 27 you say film producers themselves are careful. You think they show a tendency to be more and more careful?

A. A very marked tendency. Having seen the films that came during the time of the war and in prewar days, I say there is a marked tendency on the part of some of them to be careful.

Q. I suppose you think wrong ideas may be formed but there is no remedy for it except by public education.

A. That is the only remedy—educate the people to a knowledge of things.

Q. But I suppose in places where western films are shown the uneducated Indian forms a very small part of the audience.

A. No, last Saturday I took care to observe how many were in the Capitol cinema and found there were about one-third Europeans and two-thirds Indians.

Q. I mean of the educated or uneducated class?

A. Out of the two-thirds, half were educated and half were uneducated.

Q. Nearly 30 per cent. even in the Capitol? What is the least charge in the Capitol?

A. I think they charge four annas or six annas.

Q. You don't believe in faddists in censorship?

A. No, I don't.

Q. Do you think there should be some sort of co-ordinating agency in securing uniformity in the standard of censorship for the provincial boards?

A. I think we must have separate censorships for each province.

Q. But of course you think the present state of things should continue. Once it has passed the local board it should have currency throughout the country. With a power to veto if necessary in an emergency?

A. The district magistrate's power. The power already resides in the magistrate.

Q. Would you advocate such power of veto to be exercised with the assistance of any advisory body to the district magistrate?

A. Certainly. He does it as a matter of fact now with an advisory body. He takes the advice of the people.

Q. He does take advice?

A. He takes a tremendous amount of advice before he will stop a film.

Q. Does he do it as the result of a provision in the law or merely as a matter of protection?

A. Somebody complains that an objectionable film has been seen. He probably writes to me and I get a number of gentlemen—Muhammadans, Hindus, different people,—to view it. And I see it myself probably. Then I send a report to the District Magistrate. He considers it. He may say that the objection is not a valid one and let it go. Otherwise he will stop it.

Q. That is what is done in practice?

A. It is done always.

Q. I am glad to hear that. It is not left to a mere whim.

A. He takes the greatest care, before he vetos a film.

Q. Now I notice you have advocated that the amusement tax should be reduced slightly.

A. Slightly, in the upper classes. There is no amusement tax for the four anna class.

Q. But how far would you go to remit it?

A. I could not tell you how much. I think I would make it a little less at the top.

Q. You mean reduce the rate of the tax? Probably you would have a graduated scale going upwards?

A. Right through.

Q. But we were told here that in most of the theatres it is the exhibitor who pays and not the public.

A. No, I think it is the public. If I have to pay for a ticket I pay the amusement tax. In certain theatres in the town, the people won't pay the amusement tax or won't come, so the exhibitor pays it for them.

Q. So you are for giving some relief in the entertainment tax?

A. The rate of course at present is perfectly arbitrary.

Mr. Neogy: Mr. Richardson, your duties as licensing authority often take you to the Indian theatres—that is to say, theatres where they show Indian pictures exclusively?

A. They don't show Indian pictures exclusively.

Q. Well, mostly—where they show Indian pictures largely.

A. One does—the others don't.

Q. I am thinking of that one which does. Supposing you had no duties as licensing authority would you care to visit an Indian picture yourself?

A. I do go as a matter of fact as a private individual. I went to see, for instance, "The Life of Buddha".

Q. But a person in your position you think would care to go?

A. I know people who would go.

Q. You don't think that it would be considered a hardship if certain Indian films were shown in the theatres which now show western films exclusively, from the point of view of those who don't generally appreciate the Indian film. Supposing it was laid down that a fixed proportion, say, 10 per cent. of the films to be shown in a year, should be Indian films?

A. People won't go to see them.

Q. You don't think they will go.

A. One or two men may go. But people go to the cinema for amusement. They don't go there for instruction.

Q. Supposing the Indian film could achieve the excellence of the western film. Even then the subject would not be attractive enough?

A. They would not be attractive enough for an English audience if you made a hard and fast rule that a certain number of films should be Indian

films. But if you left it to the Englishman, he would go occasionally to see a film of any excellence.

Q. That is to say, he would be guided merely by the merits and would not like to be interfered with in the matter of his amusement.

A. Yes. He would not like to have films thrust on him.

Q. Now in reply to Question 25—which deals with the standard of censorship—you say some discrimination is necessary.

A. Yes.

Q. You have experience of censorship having been a censoring authority.

A. Yes.

Q. I suppose you used to discriminate yourself in this matter?

A. I had a portion of a film cut off that was too lurid for the audience—it might be all right for the censor but I had little bits cut off here and there and the thing was all right.

Q. Then what is the consideration that has generally guided you?

A. It is in this way. For instance, at a performance in aid of the Y. W. C. A. there was a picture of a woman bathing in a tub and somebody looking on. That horrified them. I had the part cut off.

Q. And these are equally objectionable from the point of view of Indians as well as of Europeans.

A. A male audience would probably not bother, but if you have children and women, they are very objectionable.

Q. But it doesn't matter to what nationality they belong?

A. No.

Q. Now you mention that a film named "Vir Durgadas" was stopped. Was it stopped here in Karachi under your instructions?

A. No, the district magistrate's instructions. I think it was stopped in Hyderabad if I am not mistaken.

Q. Have you any detailed information about that?

A. I have not got any here. After the passing of the Act the censorship was not in my hands. I only dealt with complaints. I have stopped films when I was censor, for instance, a film called "The Life of the Prophet". It was the life of the prophet Mahomet and the moment it was shown I stopped it because it would offend Musalmans. It was a foreign production.

Q. Did you take advice from anybody?

A. Yes. I took advice from several Muhammadans. I had them to see it.

Q. You generally take the advice of the people who are concerned—if it is a question of the life of Mahomet, you would take the advice of Muhammadans?

A. Naturally.

Q. And you select your own advisers?

A. There are working under me about 40 honorary magistrates who are leaders of different people.

Q. As many as that?

A. Yes, we have now got five benches in the city itself. We can always find people who will come forward and help you in these matters—from all classes.

Q. Now what care do you take to ascertain that no uncertified film is exhibited?

A. I take no care at all. If it has not got the mark of "D. Healy" on it or some censor, we shall ask about it. But otherwise we can't have any control.

Q. The reason why I ask is that I find the following in a letter of the U. P. Government—"It has been made clear that the district magistrates exercise no systematic supervision over the exhibition of films. They rely mainly on the police." What is the exact procedure which you adopt here?

A. As far as that goes I do not trouble at all about it. It is the police after all and not the magistrate whose duty it is to see that no uncensored films are shown.

Colonel Crawford: In your position as a licensing authority can you tell us whether the cinema habit is growing amongst Indians or not?

A. It is.

Q. The number of theatres is definitely increasing here?

A. Yes, we have 10 cinemas here.

Q. Again, as a licensing authority, do you consider the existing license is all that is required?

A. Yes.

Q. You have no suggestions to make in that respect?

A. Our powers are such that we could add a condition if we wanted to.

Q. There is a condition existing that they should show educational films, is it not so?

A. I do not think that is a condition.

Mr. Green: It can be inserted.

Colonel Crawford: I noticed you talked about pictures that would offend the religious susceptibilities of the people and those depicting political revolutions. Regarding the religious susceptibilities of the people, would you censor to the extent of preventing reformers from.....

A. From exhibiting religious films?

Q. Yes.

A. I would not do that.

Q. That might seriously offend religious susceptibilities.....

A. But the reformer will have to have his picture censored beforehand, and we should take into consideration the audience to which he is going to show it. All that we consider; and then we say, go ahead. If he is going to show it to a mixed audience, there is no question of reform and we might stop it altogether. If it was a *bona fide* reform film, for instance, a film like "Damaged Goods," we would not stop it.

Q. But that is moral reform, I was thinking of religious reform.

A. The same principle would apply to religious reform. We should require to be satisfied of the *bona fide* of the performer, and about the audience that he was going to show the film to; then we would probably pass it.

Q. Do you consider that Indian films are more popular with the Indian audiences than western films?

A. I do not think so.

Q. A large number of witnesses from the trade definitely told us that they are?

A. I disagree with them.

Q. Do you know the number of films that are produced in India to-day?

A. I do not know, but considering the number that are shown in Karachi I should not say there are very many that come round this way.

Q. Do you know the number of producing studios there are in the Bombay Presidency?

A. No.

Q. There are about 18. In view of the fact that the industry is in existence in India and that it is producing quite a number of pictures are you still of the opinion that we should not do something to assist the development of that industry?

A. Yes. You may help them as much as you like, but I should not say you should favour them as against British films.

Q. You look upon India, I suppose, as your own country?

A. Yes.

**Q.** You are not out to protect your own industry?

**A.** I am for fair play everywhere.

**Q.** Fair play for your own country first? Or would you go to the extent of damaging your own industry?

**A.** Whether there is a film industry in India or not would make no difference to India, but I would certainly not favour them as against British films. The British film industry is suffering in my opinion, it is an industry that is almost dead.

**Chairman:** How is it necessary for Britain? Do you think Britain would not survive if she had no film industry?

**A.** It would make no difference to her. But people are employed in it and it gives labour to so many and there is a demand for British films.

**Q.** Is it not the same for India?

**A.** The same thing. That is how I look at it. Give Indian films some help but not at the expense of British films.

**Mr. Green:** You point out in answer to Question 27 that "films representing western life are often unintelligible to uneducated Indians. Wrong ideas are no doubt formed. There is no remedy for this."

**A.** Except education, of course.

**Q.** May I ask you whether in your experience as a Magistrate you have any reason to believe that such misunderstandings have a tendency to increase crime?

**A.** No effect whatever.

**Q.** May I take it then that your view is that people go to the cinema for recreation and they take very little away with them?

**A.** They go absolutely for recreation. It has no effect whatever. I have watched it for 13 years.

**Q.** You consider the present censorship is satisfactory and you are distinctly frightened by faddists?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Have you any vigilance association in this city?

**A.** No. We have a social service league, but they watch nothing.

**Q.** They do not offer to help you?

**A.** No.

**Q.** I am not accusing ladies of being faddists, but would you have a certain number of ladies on the censor board?

**A.** I have no objection.

**Q.** You propose that provincial boards should be instituted in all the large towns?

**A.** Yes, to prevent delay in the passing of films. We have now got provincial boards in the capital towns. That certainly causes a little delay in getting the films. Karachi is not a capital town, but still it is a town of some importance and in cases like that we may have a small board.

**Q.** If you had so many censorship boards wouldn't chaos arise and would it not be difficult to achieve uniformity?

**A.** I do not see that we want uniformity necessarily.

**Q.** If you have a board in Karachi is it to give a certificate for Karachi only, or, say, for Sind?

**A.** It will give a certificate for all India.

**Q.** Bengal might object to a film passed by the Karachi board.

**A.** Bengal might stop that film in the same way as we could do.

**Q.** If Local Governments were to stop films in that way, it might appear to the trade that it had been done on inadequate grounds and if you multiplied the boards you would multiply the chances of interference?



A. We would have an opportunity of hearing the man who has imported the film before censoring that film and stopping it altogether, whereas he cannot import now because it has to come through another port, Bombay.

Q. You make a suggestion that all imported films should be accompanied by a certificate that they have been duly censored in the country of origin?

A. Yes.

Q. You would not accept that certificate as sufficient?

A. No. Only to allow it to come in, so as to prevent revolutionary films coming in.

Q. Might there not be diplomatic difficulties? If a film certified, say, by the Soviet Russia, to have been duly censored were to come in and be censored in Bombay or Calcutta, there might be diplomatic difficulties.....

A. We might do just as we did in the war; we may black list certain nations.

**Supplementary Written Statement of Mr. W. N. RICHARDSON,  
J.P., City Magistrate, Karachi, dated the 7th December 1927.**

I find that there is not a complete record in my office of the films stopped by me or the District Magistrate.

The following four films were stopped:—

1. 'The Life of the Prophet' in 1915.
2. 'Revelation' in 1915.
3. 'Vir Durgadas' in 1922.
4. 'Five nights' by Victoria Cross in 1916.

No. 3 was stopped by the District Magistrate and the others by me.  
There is no Inspector of Films in Karachi.

**Written Statement of Mr. N. P. A. SMITH, Superintendent of Police,  
Sind, C. I. D., dated the 20th December 1927.**

1. No.

2. (a) A fair proportion of educated Indians attend, to the extent permitted by their purse, cinemas showing the better films. Somewhat the same proportion of uneducated Indians attend cinemas, largely irrespective of the quality of the film.

(b) An average audience consists of a large number of uneducated Indians in low-priced seats, a fair sprinkling of educated Indians and British troops in medium-priced seats and a few educated Indians and other Europeans in the most expensive seats.

(c) Very few children under 14 are to be seen.

3. Anything sensational, thrilling, gorgeous, farcical or adequately sentimental.

4. No. No attempt is made to render western films intelligible to an uneducated audience by translating explanatory sentences into the local vernaculars. Any English knowing member of the audience is pestered for translations by his neighbours.

5. I have no knowledge.

(a) They are rather crude, exhibiting a certain lack of good stage management and good acting.

(b) They appear to be popular with uneducated Indian audiences. I am told educated Indians prefer western films.

- (c) I have no knowledge.
6. (a) It is quite possible.
- (b) All such films might appeal equally to both.
7. I have no particular knowledge but I should have thought there would be no difficulty.
8. 9, 10 & 11. I have no special knowledge.
12. It is not, I should think, a severe handicap.
13. I have no special knowledge.
14. Undoubtedly, if Government find this financially practicable. I am not aware of any particular demand but the appetite for such films would probably grow with consumption.
15. Speaking without technical knowledge, I should think conditions are favourable. India possesses a dependable climate, much natural beauty, places of historical interest, an ancient culture and a romantic, if somewhat tragic, history. An enormous population will supply a growing demand for Indian films as the technique of these improves.
- 16 & 17. I have no knowledge.
18. I do not know enough of the internal economy of film production to express an opinion of any value: I, however, think that some form of discrimination by Government in favour of Indian films would, at a later stage of the development of the industry in India, undoubtedly be useful. Support, at the present stage, would probably be enervating.
19. I have no knowledge.
20. No.
21. I should deprecate any proposal which stifled private enterprise.
22. Theoretically, the proposition is admirable and were it practicable, would to some extent
- (a) assist the development of the Indian industry
  - (b) assist in interpreting India to the world and
  - (c) improve the standard of Western films shown in India.
- But I cannot see how it can be given practical form except on the basis of an equal exchange of films. Indian films are as yet neither numerous nor, to Western eyes, attractive enough to excite much demand outside India. Any policy of exchange whereby the British Industry would profit to a greater degree than the Indian would be regarded by both Indian politicians and Indian public, and perhaps with justice, as exploitation.
23. (a) To a very considerable extent.
- (b) Technical advisers would readily suggest measures, if the Governments concerned have the money to spare.
24. (a) I have seen very few films to which reasonable objection could be taken and they have only been mildly objectionable in parts.
- (b) No.
- (c) Sensuous films, films which wittingly or unwittingly offend religious susceptibilities, films presenting crime, vice or revolution in unnaturally attractive guises. They harm the people most likely to be affected by them. It is impossible to specify these or the manner in which the poison works.
- (d) On the whole I think existing censorship is adequate. It will not satisfy an extreme Methodist or an extreme anybody. It however prevents the exhibition of films offensive to the normal and I think healthy public taste.
- (e) No.
25. Yes, on broad lines.

26. (a) I think adequate care is being taken. Occasions will from time to time arise, when a film released for exhibition will offend some community or section of a Community. It is not, I think, humanly possible to prevent this.

(b) Yes: "Vir Durgadas." This offended Mahomedans in certain parts of the country by its misrepresentation of Aurangzeb.

27. (a) Many Western films do misrepresent or exaggerate certain aspects of Western life but this misrepresentation is not necessarily accepted by Indians as an accurate presentation; nor does it necessarily lower Western civilisation in the eyes of Indians. The uneducated Indian quite possibly regards them as approximately accurate but I doubt if his outlook on life leads or entitles him to despise the civilisation so mirrored. On the contrary, he probably finds much in it that is attractive or progressive. The educated Indian, on the other hand, has a truer appreciation of the character of these films and regards them from much the same standpoint as the European.

If any slight misunderstanding exists and lowers the public conception of Western civilisation, it is surely wiser to let time and education produce a truer perspective and a saner demand rather than to attempt to sanctify a civilisation which, like all others, is humanly imperfect.

(b) No.

28. (a) I think all films generally are harmful for children, whether from the point of view of their health or of their imaginations. They should be shown only specially selected films.

(b) This has been replied in my answer to question, 24.

29. Yes.

30. Yes. Children below 12. Much cinema-going must be bad for the eyes and sometimes for the nerves and imagination.

31. (a) Yes.

32. I have not much experience of its working but, judging by results, it appears to be effective. The question of increasing the number of Provincial Boards might be considered.

33. It depends upon the interpretation placed on "strict". This might describe the present system. If unduly strict is meant, it would certainly cause the effects mentioned in (a), (b) and (c).

34. (a) No. The only excuse there could be for a Central Board would be its ability to represent all communities and all shades of thought in India. To possess this ability it would need to be of colossal proportions. The average Provincial Board is just as competent to interpret public opinion as would be any Central Board that could be devised. In any case of the release by a Provincial Board of a film to which objection is subsequently taken elsewhere, the grounds of objection should be brought prominently to the notice of the Provincial Board concerned. In this way, Provincial Boards would be educated up to a complete realisation of their responsibilities.

(1), (2), (3), (4). Do not arise.

(b) No.

(c) & (d). Do not arise.

35. (a) Yes.

(b) No.

36. (a) Yes, I should think this arrangement is satisfactory. I have no knowledge of their qualifications. The main qualifications should, I think, be honesty, a knowledge of Indian conditions and common-sense.

(b) No.

37. (a) Yes.

(b) Additional safeguards are not needed.

38. No.

39. No.

40. I see no necessity. I have not noticed any that were objectionable.

41. Yes.

42. A representative of the trade might be nominated to each Provincial Board of Censors.

43. (a) I have no knowledge.

44. To a considerable extent, by drawing attention to films that are below standard.

45. (a) I think not except as in (b) below.

(b) Yes.

**Oral Evidence of Mr. N. P. A. SMITH, Superintendent of Police,  
Sind, C. I. D., on Tuesday, the 22nd November 1927.**

*Chairman:* How long have you been in Sind?

A. For about 5 or 6 years.

Q. How many years' service have you had?

A. 15 years.

Q. I find your statement very refreshing. You do not think there is any increase of crime due to cinema?

A. No.

Q. Nor do you think that any immoral films are being generally circulated?

A. No.

Q. I believe a certain amount of exaggeration in films is inevitable in order to make the film attractive.

A. I think so. I agree.

Q. You consider the present system of censorship adequate and there is nothing to complain of?

A. Yes.

Q. You are a great believer in education to remove any misunderstanding there may be from what I see from your answer to question No. 27. You say, "It is surely wiser to let time and education produce a truer perspective and a saner demand rather than to attempt to sanctify a civilisation which, like all others, is humanly imperfect".

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think that any film should be classified as for adults only?

A. I should rather classify them as for children only.

*Mr. Green:* Mr. Smith, your answers are very clear and I do not think there is much to ask. You have had 5 years experience of Sind and 10 years in other parts of the Bombay Presidency?

A. Yes.

Q. In your present post does your jurisdiction cover the whole of Sind?

A. Yes.

Q. You have had occasion to visit the other parts of Sind frequently?

A. Yes.

Q. Can you tell us if there are many cinemas in Sind outside Karachi? I understand there are 2 or 3 in Hyderabad.

A. I know Hyderabad personally. I do not know about Sukkur very much.

Q. We were told that there are one or two small cinemas in other parts. Have you experience of cinemas in other parts of the Presidency also?

A. Poona and Bombay.

Q. So far the evidence has very largely dealt with big cities like Bombay and Karachi, and we have been given to understand that the taste even of the illiterate audiences is changing as it is changing in other countries, that they greatly liked at first "wild west" films, afterwards they took to serial films and then to drama. Can you confirm this from your own experience? I am only asking you that question, and in case you do not know, you need not answer it.

A. I do not think I can say anything definitely on that.

Q. There is only one other question I wish to ask you. In answer to question No. 42 you say, "A representative of the trade might be nominated to each Provincial Board of Censors". Don't you think that there might be two risks about that, one that the trade secrets might leak out, i.e., a man might learn what other producers and importers were doing, and secondly, that he might be a judge in his own case?

A. He would hardly be able to impose his will on the Board. But I do not quite follow the other point.

Q. If a representative of house A, say, were there, and there are houses B, C, and D concerned in the trade, he would know all the films they were importing and all the films they were producing.

A. Is that a secret now?

Q. In production to a certain extent it is. It is not so easy to prevent a man knowing what other people are importing.

Mr. Coatsman: Mr. Smith's suggestion is to have a representative of the whole trade.

A. Yes.

Mr. Green: Would they not find it difficult to appoint anybody except one of their own body?

A. He might be either an exhibitor or a producer.

Colonel Crawford: In answer to question No. 24 (a) you say, "I have seen very few films to which reasonable objection could be taken and they have only been mildly objectionable in parts." I gather you are generally satisfied?

A. Yes.

Q. Can you give me any idea of scenes which you consider objectionable in parts?

A. In a certain film which I saw there was a great deal of kissing. What I objected to there was the manner of kissing shown. I did not like it, but I would not say it is the sort of thing one should have eliminated. Other people might like it, or do like it.

Q. As regards religious films, as a person connected with the maintenance of law and order would you suggest that the censor must rigorously cut out the efforts of reformers?

A. No. I should say that is a matter for the Board itself to exercise its common sense. It is rather difficult to express an opinion on it unless the thing actually comes up for censorship. I do not think any censorship can be completely hide-bound or rigorous. You have got to adjust yourself to circumstances. Conditions are changing from time to time, and what may not be fit for passing to-day may be fit for passing next year. I should say that if the unorthodox is in a very definite minority and if its opinion could be expressed otherwise, I would ban a film dealing with religious reform. I think there are many other ways of reforming religion than by the screen.

Q. Your opinion is that the film is not a suitable method of tackling this question?

A. It might be. It all depends on the Board. It would have to decide on the nature and amount of the shock given by the proposed reform. I think the Board should represent the majority opinion.

Mr. Neogy: Your statement is one of the best statements we have had so far, if I may say so. You say that Indian industry should not be given any protection just now as support at the present stage would probably be enervating. You mean assistance could be given at a later stage?

A. Yes.

Q. What exactly do you mean by that statement?

A. From the very little I have seen of the Indian films I believe there are very great prospects for the industry. At the present time it is probably run by people who are not the people who will eventually run it 10 or 20 years hence. It is financed by people who will not be the people who will finance it 10 or 20 years hence. The actors and actresses you have now will not be the actors and actresses some years hence. Hence any money that is given now may be misdirected. I would let the industry find its feet first. Other people will gradually come in as the importance of the industry is realised, and then I think will be the time for Government to support it.

Q. Meanwhile Government should not take any interest in this industry? Is that your view?

A. Take an interest in it by all means, but not necessarily finance it.

Chairman: You are prepared to concede to give technical assistance and other things?

A. Yes. I think this is an industry which will stand on its own legs rapidly. I say that from my limited experience of course.

Mr. Neogy: So you won't mind a cautious amount of assistance?

A. I should not mind anything at all.

Q. It is only a question of degree?

A. Yes.

Mr. Coatman: I should like also to say how much I have enjoyed your statement and that I practically agree with every word of it. We have heard from various people of the possible use of the cinema in education, agriculture, public health and so on. Can you say what use you can make of the cinema for police purposes?

A. From that point of view I have not considered the question.

Q. I understand in Bombay and in Sind you are taking the *modus operandi* method of investigating burglary and so on. Could the cinema help you in this direction?

A. I think there are many other cheap ways of doing it. I may say I have not thought about it.

Q. We have it in the Punjab.

A. I have seen some of them and they are very nice. But I should think there are other cheaper methods.

Q. Could you think of any other way in which it could be used for police work, teaching how to take finger prints, etc.?

A. How?

Q. I remember in the Punjab we had a lot of trouble over smudged and indecipherable finger prints and the Punjab police set out to educate the province in taking finger prints and undoubtedly they succeeded to a large extent. Supposing you show on the screen how to take finger prints in large melas and so on, where you get large crowds—I am only throwing this out as a suggestion.

A. I think it is possible, but it seems to me you are putting the final touches on a system of administration which is very crude. There are

many things requiring money and expenditure of money which are of much more importance in matters of crime detection than this.

Q. Do you think it will be of help?

A. I think there is scope eventually for a lot of these things but I think the money might be better spent in other ways now.

**Oral Evidence of Mr. C. J. MEHTA, Inspector, Madan Theatres, Ltd., on Tuesday, the 22nd November 1927.**

*Chairman:* Where do you live generally?

A. In Bombay, and I have travelled all round India. For the last six months I am living here.

Q. Are you connected with the cinema trade?

A. Yes, for the last 17 years I am connected with the cinema trade. In Bombay I was employed by Messrs. K. Sethna and Co.—they were film dealers in India from about 1912 to 1918.

Q. What are you doing now?

A. I have joined Madan Theatres, Ltd., for the last 4 years. I am the Inspector there. I inspect various Theatres in India and travel in different parts of India. I am Inspector from the point of view of accounts, giving advice and so on.

Q. What sort of western films are now getting popular with the people?

A. The thing is, what appeals to one, does not appeal to another. The educated classes prefer films based on popular novels. The uneducated prefer stunt films, films showing acrobatic feats. It all depends upon the locality of the cinema and the class of people that go to the cinema.

Q. Do the uneducated classes care for sex films?

A. Not particularly. There is nothing produced in that direction at present in India.

Q. I mean western films.

A. They do not appeal to them to that extent. They want stunts, horsemanship, fighting, boxing—such films appeal to them.

Q. Do you frequent the cinema yourself?

A. Yes. I do not see much of the films now-a-days unless I think they are of much value. I do not care generally to see them. I have seen enough of them.

Q. I want to know what is your experience of people who attend the cinemas.

A. It depends upon the place where the cinema is. I just go to the cinemas to see what kinds of pictures are attractive to get some idea and add to my knowledge.

Q. In order to advise what class of films is popular and should be sent for?

A. Yes.

Q. You think that the censorship is now adequate?

A. Yes. But when the Board of Censors was first constituted, it consisted of people who had no idea of the trade. Now the members have become educated in it. When the Board was formed they should have taken men from the line.

Q. I suppose there are trade jealousies in your trade?

A. Certainly not.

Q. No jealousy at all?

A. No.

Q. If a trade man is put on there will be no.....

A. I do not say a trade man particularly. I say any man from the service.

Q. I thought you were advocating that a tradesman should be put on the Board.

A. No, any man who has education, who has seen different parts of India and who can understand the sense of the people.

Q. Are you concerned in the production part of Madan's.

A. No, but I can give you an idea.

Q. How?

A. I have studied it from books.

Q. No, I don't mean that way; you have no practical knowledge of the production side of the industry?

A. Not practical knowledge, but I understand it. I know what defects there are. I could point out thousands of defects in Indian pictures which it is not possible for a layman to do. There are so many photographers in India but they don't know how to make an actor sit, or how they should act or be dressed, etc., etc.

Q. Even in films produced by Madans you find the same defects?

A. Yes, but they are better. I don't say that because I am an employee. They have studied the matter. The question of producing films is a very difficult one. The total capital of all the film companies combined may be 15 lakhs in India whereas the cost of a single film like "Ben Hur" is over a crore of rupees.

Q. We realise all that. We want to know anything which you know yourself. Do you think the cinema is getting more and more popular.

A. Certainly the business is on the increase.

Q. I would like to know whether in the mofussil more theatres are springing up in the district parts.

A. It does not pay. The cost is so heavy to maintain a cinema. Therefore the Government should help them.

Q. You are familiar with the Bombay Presidency.

A. Yes, I have travelled in different parts of the Bombay Presidency.

Q. How large a population is needed in order to run a cinema successfully.

A. First when a new cinema is opened people must be educated and trained to go to the cinema and by that time the man who has started the cinema is at a heavy loss and has to close down.

Q. All these are commonplaces. What I want to know is is it spreading in the mofussil?

A. Yes it is spreading. It won't pay a permanent cinema, where there is a population of less than 50,000; but it will pay travelling cinemas.

Q. Do you travel in the mofussil in the course of your duties?

A. No, we are only concerned with the large towns.

Q. Then we won't bother you about that. Men of experience in the line say Indian films are becoming popular with the people.

A. Yes, there is a demand for them. 80 per cent. are Western films and 20 per cent. only Indian films.

Q. Can you tell us as regards the moral tone of the pictures, British and American films, is there much difference?

A. They are morally very good.

Q. Which?

A. Both classes.

Q. But is there any difference between the two? Does one show a better tone than the other?



A. Of course the British have not produced much up to the present time. There is nothing on the market that can stand against the American film.

Q. It may be improved later on.

A. But the Americans are so far in advance that it will be very difficult to compete with them. The same difficulty arose in the matter of aniline dyes. During the war the British people spent lakhs on making aniline dyes. After the war they lost heavily against Germany. From my personal experience I can say that it will be the same fate for the British cinema industry, unless they can produce pictures of the same merit, the same standing, the same acting as the Americans. Once they do that they can stand but laying any imposition will kill the trade. One more thing that goes against the business is the import duty here which is very excessive.

Q. But do you not believe in developing the Indian industry by putting more duty on films imported?

A. Of course that will develop but there is no capital coming forward for Indian film production.

Q. If there is money to be made, capital will come forward.

A. Not to the extent required. It is not possible. Nobody would venture to put his capital into anything which he fears is not going to be successful.

Mr. Coatman: I think I heard you say that the minimum size of a town where you could start a permanent cinema is a town of over 50,000 inhabitants.

A. Yes with a town of 50,000 you can start it.

Q. Well here is a town of 200,000 and there are nine.

A. There are too many and I guarantee some of them will close down in the course of another year and some are already thinking of closing down.

Q. Well, do you know of towns of less than 50,000 who have got cinemas?

A. Villages which have a mill industry, ginning or pressing—that may be good for once in a way. A population of 50,000 is all right for a travelling company.

Q. Have you thought about that carefully. On this sort of thing we want carefully considered opinions.

A. I am telling you from my personal knowledge because when I was in Bombay people used to come from Berar, Central Provinces, Madras Presidency, etc., to buy materials from us and they used to go on prospering but they could not stay at one station for a long time; they had to change their place, i.e., move on of business. Only travelling companies do well in such places.

Q. What part of India are you really familiar with?

A. Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, United Provinces and Lahore,—I was Manager there for some months; as also in the United Provinces and the Punjab. I was in Rawalpindi and Amritsar for a number of months.

Q. Your experience is confined to the big towns?

A. I have been also in small towns like Surat.

Mr. Green: Surat is hardly a small town.

A. I am talking of 10 years back. Cinemas did not succeed in Surat 10 years ago.

Mr. Coatman: You of course have a good deal of experience of audiences and what they are like. Do you think that the uneducated Indian audience has acquired a taste for the Western type of film.

A. They care more for the Western than for the Indian film, the uneducated specially, if I were to talk of Sind I would refer to the Mektani type. They would much rather see Western than Indian pictures.

Q. What is the reason?

A. There is more enjoyment, more stunts, more life in the Western film.

Q. But do they distinguish between the different subjects of European films? I can quite understand their liking a stunt programme like Harold Lloyd, but do they like the love scenes.

A. They don't like them to the same extent as educated classes. They don't realise the true merits of a love scene. In fact they pass remarks on it; they see it with different eyes from those of an educated man.

Q. When they see Indian films which include love scenes, do you think an uneducated Indian audience would like to see the love scenes treated more temperately.

A. They will shout and cheer.

Q. In Indian pictures they do not prefer this violent kissing and so on.

A. No.

*Colonel Crawford:* You cater mainly for educated audiences in your cinemas?

A. At present I am catering for educated audiences.

Q. Would you have anything to say if we recommended that in those cinemas you should exhibit a quota of Indian films?

A. It won't pay us to do that, because nobody will come to our cinema. We will just be inviting one class and driving away another. It would be all right if the Indian film were only educational or instructional.

Q. Do you think you could include in your programme one reel of instructional picture?

A. Yes, that will be interesting to everybody and we shall be glad to pay something; because India is our country and one must learn something about the place where he lives rather than foreign places. It might be something in the shape of a topical budget, but it won't pay people to make such a film in India. It is too costly.

Q. To produce even a one reel film?

A. Yes, because people must travel in different parts of India to get their pictures; they must learn something about it; and what they will realise will not meet their expenses. So there must be some support.

Q. Thank you that is all.

**Oral Evidence of Mr. MOTIRAM VALLICHA, Manager, Empire Film Co., on Tuesday, the 22nd November 1927.**

*Chairman:* You are Mr. Motiram Vallicha?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you see our questionnaire, Mr. Motiram Vallicha?

A. Yes.

Q. You have not sent us any written statement?

A. Because the questionnaire was sent to my colleague Mr. Rewashankar also, and since he sent the reply which was drawn both by myself and him I did not think it necessary.

Q. You mean the proprietor of the Capitol theatre?

A. Yes.

Q. Yes, we examined him yesterday.

A. That answer was framed by him and me together, so there was no use sending in a separate statement, since he and I are in agreement with each other.

Q. You were here when he gave evidence?

A. No.

Q. But his views represent your views also?

A. Yes, more or less. I look after the film importing business; it is called the Empire Film Company. The Capitol Theatre and the Empire Film Co. are one and the same concern. But I look after the film importing business.

Q. How long is it since you started the Empire Film business?

A. We started it last year. We import and rent out films to all parts of India, including Burma and Ceylon. We buy our pictures on an outright basis, and the whole territory is reserved for us.

Q. Where do you buy those pictures from?

A. We buy pictures from America, sometimes from France, in fact we buy from any place where we can get cheap and good pictures.

Q. How do you manage to find what is a good picture and what is a bad picture?

A. We get the photographs, the stories and various other printed and advertising matter. It is called the Exhibitors' Campaign Book, a book on each picture is published by the producer, and from that book we can select what is good and what is not good.

Q. What were you doing before you took up this line?

A. I was doing a film business of my own. I have some experience in the line and I know what would be popular with the public. I have been doing this business for the last seven years.

Q. Where do you get the cheapest pictures from?

A. To-day the cheapest market is America.

Q. What is the lowest price you have paid for your pictures?

A. About £40 or 200 dollars. But there are some pictures for which I have paid considerably more, something like 500 dollars. But you might say that on an average a good picture can be had for say 500 dollars.

Q. How many pictures have you bought since you started this business?

A. We have bought about 21 pictures, during the last 12 months.

Q. Do you get the exclusive right to exhibit them in India and Burma?

A. We get the so called rights, because the American copyright is not recognised here. I forgot to mention this most important point in our answers to your questionnaire which were given to you yesterday by Mr. Rewashankar, —that the American copyright is not recognised in India. All pictures are copyrighted by producers. There are two kinds of copyrights. One is the copyright for the scenario or the plot, and the other is the copyright for a negative. Both copyrights are necessary to safeguard one's interests. If you have a copyright for a scenario and do not possess a copyright for the negative, your interests are not so fully safeguarded. Producers get copyrights in America, but these copyrights are not recognised in India, because those pictures have not been copyrighted in London simultaneously. I had a dispute in connection with one of the pictures recently, and I find that the law says that unless and until the pictures or the publication of any book or novel or stage play is copyrighted in London and New York simultaneously, the British Empire does not recognise the American copyright. Very many times it so happens that copyrights have not been effected simultaneously in London and New York, and thus exclusive rights are not granted to us. We do not get our pictures on mere footage basis. We have to pay for the film extra, and also a Royalty charge for getting the exclusive rights for a territory which is assigned to us. The sum of 200 dollars that we pay is merely the profit or Royalty or whatever you may call it, but in addition we have to pay for the films, advertising matter and for everything else. We pay three cents a foot.

Q. Is that a good film?

A. It makes no difference whether a picture is good or bad. The price of the film is based on Royalty and not on footage. A bad picture will have the same film value as a good picture.

Q. It may be a used up film?

A. It is quite different. I am talking of laboratory prints.

Q. What about used films?

A. I am not buying them although they are available in London and in the international markets at the rate of a pound per thousand feet. The difficulty is we have to pay the same rate of duty on a used up film as on a new film. Used up films are imported by a few mushroom people. They are available in London in very large quantities.

Q. Do you mean to say that London is storing American used up films for the purpose of sale abroad here?

A. Yes. They are offering all used up pictures from America, pictures on which they have absolutely no right.

Q. You mean the London market is affording facilities for buying up used up films in India?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you know of any traders who actually import such films?

A. I know lots of them in Bombay and Calcutta, because the used up films are very cheap and they do not last long. You can get them at the rate of one pound per thousand feet whereas a new print cannot be had for less than thirty dollars a reel of one thousand feet.

Q. I suppose you have not been to London?

A. No, but I have travelled all over India.

Q. Do you supply your films to Madras?

A. At present I have no customer in Madras, because Madans have got the monopoly there. I want customers in Bombay, and I cannot get a first run theatre because in all big cities like Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Poona and in a few others, all the theatres are completely monopolised by Madans. There are no theatres in Bombay where we can get a first run. There is only Mr. Hague's theatre in Bombay. The Universal people have recently taken up a theatre, but it is not available to us, because they show their own American pictures in it. In Calcutta there were two, the Purna and the Opera House. They too have got their own pictures.

Q. Why don't you open your own theatres?

A. I have not got enough money.

Q. Can you not enter into some arrangement with some one? Is there no room for more theatres?

A. I don't think there is room for any more theatres here. Some of the towns are overcrowded.

Q. I understand they are going to open a new theatre here called the Rama Theatre?

A. It is not a new theatre. It was in existence before. It was closed several times and again they are going to open it. You may call it a fourth run theatre because it is situated in the slums of Karachi where you don't have any chance of earning much.

Q. What is the average earning of a cinema theatre?

A. I am very much connected with the Capitol Theatre. I practically act as the Manager of the theatre, and I have got full charge of advertising and so on. I have been associated with its proprietor for the last so many years, and I find that our Capitol Theatre is doing exceedingly well in Karachi, in spite of the fact that we have got strong opposition from Madans. But in account of certain defects in their management, we are able to get on better financially.

Q. What about the theatres in the heart of the town, take for instance the Imperial?

A. Last night you went to the Imperial theatre, I believe. Our average taking is over Rs. 8,000 a month in the Imperial.

Q. But they said that you got only about Rs. 120 last night?

A. But it was an odd night. We get crowded houses on Saturdays, Sundays and on other holidays, and the average taking on those days come to about Rs. 1,600. On Saturday and Sunday alone our takings come to about Rs. 800. The house is fully packed on those days. But we consider that our takings last night were very good for an off day. Saturdays and Sundays are the days on which we get a good house and it is from the shows on these days that we are able to make a profit.

Q. Have you every thought of opening theatres in mofussil towns also?

A. I know there is a chance in certain towns, for instance in Quetta. There are only two theatres there, one is called the Empire and the other is called the Opera House. The Empire is in the cantonment and the Opera is in the city. Mr. Pellier has got the monopoly of the Empire Theatre in the cantonment, and I daresay he has got an income of about Rs. 3,000 a month after paying for all expenses, film hire, etc., because he has got the sole monopoly. It is a big military station, and military officers are the people who pay well. The Indian house is quite good, but most of the takings are taken away by the film owners. We cannot get Indian pictures on fixed hire. We have to pay 50 per cent. of the gross takings for the first run and 33½ per cent. for the second run for the Indian films. For English pictures we have to pay on an average about Rs. 400 in Karachi for a complete programme, and we change our programme twice a week. One programme will be made for Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, and another will be made out for Saturday, Sunday, Monday and Tuesday. For Saturday programmes we pay a little more and for the programme of other days we pay a little less. On an average the hire comes to about Rs. 400.

Q. Do you think that Indian films are becoming popular?

A. Yes. Every day they are becoming more popular.

Q. What do you do if there are any objectionable features in them? Do you inform the producers?

A. They are already censored in Bombay.

Q. Suppose the audience finds some objectionable feature in them, what do you?

A. It is for the officials to take action.

**Written Statement of the European Association (Sind Branch),  
dated the 19th November 1927.**

1. No.

2. (a), (b) and (c) We have no definite knowledge of these matters.

3. In our opinion films of the melodramatic type are most popular with Indian audiences, e.g., cowboy films.

5. Whilst a few Indian-produced films are good the majority are not up to the standard of the Western films.

6-15. We are not sufficiently well informed on these matters to give answers of any value to the Committee.

16. We do not consider that films of real competitive exhibition value in the world's market could be produced in this country at present.

17. No.

18-20. We are not in a position to reply.

21. We are not in favour of this proposal.

22. We are of the opinion that India should give some measure of encouragement to British Empire films.

(a) We cannot say.

(b) Yes, certainly.

23. (a) Much more freely than at present. An Indian audience is always interested in films depicting events occurring in other parts of the globe.

24. (a) and (b) No.

(c) As long as virtue triumphs over vice, vice in films is permissible.

(d) (1) and (2) Yes.

(e) No.

25. Yes, but this is already done.

26. (a) and (b) No.

27. (a) Yes. We consider that some films representing Western life are misunderstood by the uneducated Indian. He is unable to follow the plot of the play from the printed titles and hence gains the impression that it is a true representation of the life lead in the West. We have no knowledge of any undesirable results from this.

In our opinion the reading matter of the films should be also printed in the vernacular and if possible made more fully explanatory of the play than at present.

(b) No.

28. (a) and (b) No.

29. No.

30. On the whole children under eight years of age should only be allowed to attend "Children's Performances".

31. Yes.

32. System satisfactory.

33. (a) and (b) Yes.

34. (a) No.

34. (b) to 40. We regret we are not in a position to give answers of any value to these questions.

41-43. No.

### **Oral Evidence of Dr. E. T. WRENCH, representative of the European Association (Sind Branch), on Tuesday, the 22nd November 1927.**

*Chairman:* I suppose you are practising in Karachi?

A. Yes.

Q. How long you been here?

A. For about 12 years.

Q. You represent the European Association?

A. Yes.

Q. I understand the statement which you have submitted to us represents the views of the European Association?

A. Yes.

Q. Can you tell me if that memorandum was prepared by a Committee?

A. It was prepared by a sub-committee, and then it was re-submitted to the Committee.

Q. I don't know if they have discussed the question of the quota system which is being introduced in England to give help to the British film industry? Have they considered that question at all? Are you prepared to say something on that?

A. We do not know very much about it. We ourselves have not thought about it.

Q. The general opinion seems to be that when Government interfere with the trade, they resent it. I do not know whether that is so?

A. I personally do not hold that view. Probably a merchant would be better qualified to express an opinion on that subject.

Q. Now you say in reply to No. 22, about the policy suggested by the Imperial Conference about preference to British Empire films, that India should give some measure of encouragement to British Empire films, I suppose with due regard to Indian film industry?

A. I think it is a question to be answered by experts.

Q. With regard to 23 (c), I should like to know whether it will be advantageous to have trade agents in India of other parts of the Empire and those other parts to have Indian trade agents there so that they may co-operate with each other and make conditions better known?

A. That again is surely a question for experts to answer.

Q. I am quite interested in the answers of your Association on the social aspects of the cinema. You don't think that there is a large amount of circulation of objectionable films in the country?

A. No, Sir, there is a considerably less number of films in Karachi than before. Things are improving now.

Q. I mean there is nothing of a serious nature which calls for special or particular treatment just at present?

A. No.

Q. You are satisfied with the censorship?

A. Yes.

Q. What would you prefer? To have certain films marked as "for adults only" or you would prefer to have Children's performances?

A. We have children's performances, and they are very successful.

Q. You don't advocate marking certain films as suitable for adults only?

A. You can do so, but children don't understand if they go to them.

Q. I see you suggest here that the foreign films might usefully be exhibited with the captions also shown in the vernacular. That would be an advantage you think, is it not?

A. I think that is important. I have some clerks employed in mercantile houses here who come under my treatment, and they tell me that they get no idea of the story unless they read the captions. For instance, in a picture a woman may be repulsing or yielding, and they can't connect it. They think they are separate pictures. It is quite easy to give captions in separate languages. It is done in Egypt and in a number of other countries. I am quite sure that in parts of Central Europe it is generally done where they have three languages. We have 52 languages in Karachi, and it will be a great improvement if the captions are written in at least two or three important vernaculars of the district.

Mr. Neogy: You are of opinion that India should give some measure of encouragement to Empire films?

A. I approve of that.

Q. At the same time your Association thinks that the films produced in India are not of that standard that would appeal to the west?

A. I think not, I have seen very few Indian films.

Q. Therefore it seems to me that in any scheme of Imperial preference the only country to benefit would be Great Britain, i.e., if Indian films cannot be shown to British audiences in England and if under the scheme of Imperial preference some concessions were to be granted to other parts of the Empire in sending out their films to India, then India would not gain anything under that arrangement, because her own films would not find a market outside.

A. I cannot see how Indian films could get encouragement because there are very few people who produce good films, and there are very few cinemas in India. I think their total number is about 400.

Q. So India will have to wait till she improves the quality of the films?

A. Yes. First of all, everybody has got to start at home. When she gets about 4,000 cinema theatres, perhaps she will be able to make suitable films, and that will mean time.

*Colonel Crawford:* What are your views, Dr. Wrench, on the question of Imperial Preference?

A. I really don't know what that means. I know nothing about it.

Q. There is a suggestion that each portion of the Empire individually should consider the desirability of compelling a quota of 74 per cent. of British Empire films to be shown in any programme. That I believe has been adopted in New Zealand, and it is under consideration in Australia, and it has just been adopted in England, and there is a proposal that it might be considered by other parts of the Empire. I want to know what the European view is on the question of Imperial Preference from the point of view of India?

A. Clearly if it means some sort of preference, one or two companies will come out and take Indian pictures. I don't feel that I can answer that question.

Q. Would you say that the general opinion is that India should enter into Imperial Preference only when it is an economic advantage to her to do so?

A. Not necessarily.

Q. You know something about Australia. Is not the policy which Australia adopts towards Imperial Preference good?

A. What other policy is there to adopt?

Q. You think that there should be reciprocity, is that your point of view?

A. Yes.

Q. Can you elaborate somewhat on the question of misrepresentation? Do you think there is misrepresentation of western life through the film to-day?

A. I should say that western life is well shown here. After all, industrialism in business and trade is to the fore now. Its main object is luxury for side of life. I don't think that they depreciate the western life, on the other hand they rather appreciate it. Sometimes in some pictures they show pictures relating to millionaires and people in very comfortable circumstances. In other words, one does not go to the films to see the reality of life.













